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ORDON AMES

A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

EDITED BY ALICE AMES WINTER

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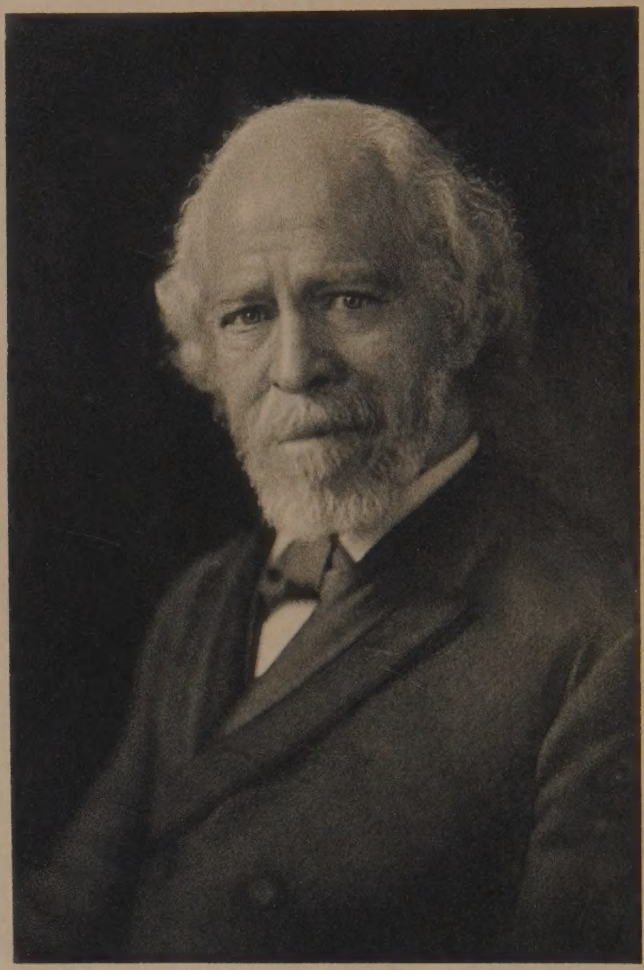
Charles Gordon Ames

A Spiritual Autobiography



Chas. Gordon Ames

Charles Gordon Ames

A Spiritual Autobiography

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With an Epilogue by
Alice Ames Winter

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Preface

Charles Gordon Ames, whose story of his religious life forms the substance of this small volume, was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, on October 3, 1828. He spent his boyhood on the farm of his adopted father, Thomas Ames, near Canterbury, New Hampshire, and at fourteen began to earn his living in a printing-office in the near-by Dover. In 1849 he was ordained as a Free Baptist minister, and spent a year or two in wandering preaching, until in 1851 he was sent to Minnesota as a missionary. Here a change came over his views that at first drove him out of the ministry into secular occupations, as register of deeds of Hennepin County, and as editor of the *Minnesota Republican*. But at last, finding himself at home among the Unitarians, he reëntered the ministry, and the rest of his life was spent in his pastorates in Bloomington, Illinois; in Cincinnati; in Albany; in Santa Cruz and San José, California; in Germantown, Pennsylvania; in

Philadelphia; and in Boston. For a brief period (1877–80) he was editor of the leading Unitarian paper, the *Christian Register*.

Mr. Ames was twice married, first in 1850 to Sarah Jane Daniels, and after her death to Julia Frances Baker in 1863. He died in Boston on April 15, 1912, at the age of eighty-three and a half.

The chapters which follow were, in the main, presented in the form of reminiscences to the Church of the Disciples; but they did not take their final form until Mr. Ames's eightieth year, when the transformation that had been wrought in his inner life appeared to him in a consecutive, even a dramatic, form, which, he believed, might be of practical worth to others who might be passing through a similar experience.

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Athanasia

The ship may sink,
And I may drink
A lasting death in the bitter sea;
But all that I leave
In the ocean-grave
Can be slipped and spared, and no loss to me.

What care I
Though falls the sky,
And the shrivelling earth to a cinder burn?
No fires of doom
Can ever consume
What never was made nor meant to burn.

Let go the breath!
There is no death
To the living soul, nor loss, nor harm.
Dust of the clod
Is the life of God,
Let it mount, as it will, from form to form.

On Lake Winnipiseogee
August, 1862

[*Facsimile*]

A Spiritual Autobiography

Chapter I

THE RELIGION OF A BOY

I SUPPOSE that every one finds his memories of childhood mixed with fancies which he cannot verify as facts. His personal history loses itself in a vague mythical period which is like the primeval ages of the world. But these morning mists lifted from my own mind before I had completed my third year. From that time forward, with increasing clearness my personal experiences find a partial record in the book of remembrance.

Left parentless in earliest infancy, I found myself when about forty months old living in the family of a farmer in the hill country of central New Hampshire. Memory bears traces of my journey thither from my birthplace in Dorchester, Massachusetts, — a journey of seventy-five miles, of which the last ten must have been taken in an open sleigh on a winter

night, for I can still see the lights in the windows of the houses along the road. But my present purpose is not to set down the incidents and conditions of a life which is still full of interest to myself, but to make a report of the religious impressions received in childhood and early life.

My new home was in a family of most honorable character, intelligent beyond the average of country people, full of public spirit, and in touch with much of the best life and literature of the times. They were all hard-working and well-disciplined people, accepting the daily tasks and long hours and making generous use of the results of prosperous industry. I know, too, that there was a great deal of human nature in the house, — a mixture of fun and earnest and the spontaneous activity of the impulses and sentiments that characterize the Anglo-Saxon race and temperament. Yet life went forward for the most part under a certain sobriety of discipline, an austere restraint and a shadow of misgiving, as if all that was natural might also be dangerous.

The family were rigid adherents of Calvinistic Orthodoxy. The worship at the Free-Will

Baptist Meeting-House, half a mile away, was regarded with condescending tolerance; but we all went habitually to the ancient Congregational Meeting-House, a distance of two miles and a half, where the farmers' families gathered, with awful gravity on every face, and listened, morning and afternoon, to long sermons and long prayers, uttered from a high pulpit by a venerable pastor. The meeting-house was of the plain country type, with high, hard pews and a gallery on three sides; but it had a steeple and a bell, and to my young eyes was suggestive of a magnificence like that of Solomon's Temple and of a solemn majesty like that of the celestial world.

At home I was early made to realize the doctrine of total depravity and of the exceeding sinfulness of my own nature. How well I lived up to this doctrine can partly be guessed from the kind of instruction which was thought most suitable for my restraint and salvation. I can hardly have been more than four years old when I was made familiar with the Scripture that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." I think no

one around me could understand the difference between wayward, childish impulse and actual wickedness. If anybody ever included me in the saying "of such is the kingdom" I was never made aware of it. The opening words of the Lord's Prayer did not at all counteract the impression of a stern and dreadful Being who had me in his power and looked at me with a hard eye. The imagery of terrorism took early possession of my mind, and followed me for many years as a frightful reality. Often in daytime reverie, and sometimes in dreams of the night, I saw the leaping flames of hell, out of which infernal hands were clutching to draw me in. Often I pictured myself as one of an assembled world standing before the great white throne and hearing helplessly the sentence of endless doom. I was fascinated by the hymns which portrayed the terrors of death and judgment, and was haunted by visions of others entering into a place of light and happiness and of myself shut in outer darkness.

My first acquaintance with death came from looking at the still, white face of an old man in his coffin. From a recent visit to the graveyard,

I know that this happened before I was five years old. Both at home and in the meeting-house, death was spoken of in tones which made it the one event to be dreaded, and as the decisive point of our future destiny. I never heard of a death without wondering what had become of the soul; and to all this was added the horrors of physical dissolution and the gloom and ghastliness of the grave.

> "Your sparkling eyes and blooming cheeks
> Must wither like the blasted rose,
> The coffin, earth and winding sheet
> Must soon your active limbs enclose."

I can now see that while Orthodox teaching gave me a conception of the severity of the divine government, it was to an occasional attendance at the Free-Will Baptist meetings and especially during revival seasons that I was indebted for a banquet of horrors about death, judgment, and eternity. Yet it was in Watts's hymn-book that I found the lines: —

> "My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
> Damnation and the dead."

On all sides physical death was spoken of as a consequence of sin. On account of man's trans-

gression a shadow and a curse had fallen on nature itself, which brought forth briers and thorns because of Adam's fall. Our country roads were bordered with sweet-scented thistles and luxuriant blackberry bushes, but I noted not the fragrance nor the beauty. I saw illustrations of the dreadful Scripture. Thus year after year my life unfolded in the shadow of fear.

I had two reasons for fear. Besides this dreadful teaching, there was a sense of sin. Even a child may have a conscience and feel a steady inward pressure of moral distinctions. I heard clearly the voice which said, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." But I was often aware that I heard without heeding; and all my childish frailties seemed to confirm the doctrine that I was thoroughly evil or hateful to God and could be rescued only by a miracle. I was even made to feel that I was not lovely to anybody. There was a good deal of severity at home and at school, with plentiful occasions for discipline and a pretty steady fire of reproof. How could I understand the contradictions of my daily experiences? I abounded in good desires and good

resolutions, but seemed incapable of carrying them out — like a slave born to evil; and I had not even the poor comfort of expressing my own good desires, for my attempts to sing the hymns of penitence and aspiration were discouraged as profanity. Yet I was told that if I prayed aright and believed in Christ as a Saviour, God would take this wicked heart so full of all evil and give me a new heart, clean and right. I could understand the duty of repentance; I could pray with tears for forgiveness; but I was often in distressing doubt what could be meant by believing in Christ, and was very attentive whenever the minister offered an explanation. Did ever a boy more diligently read the Bible? And I sincerely desired to know its inmost meaning. I faithfully committed the verses given out as Sunday-School lessons, and my conscience was often searched by the questions which were put by the teacher. My thoughts were steeped in the Bible. I knew I was not to be judged by outward conduct alone, but by inward motives. I understood that my thoughts and the intents of my heart were visible to the all-seeing Eye. I knew that to covet is to steal, that hatred is

murder, that anger deserves hell-fire, that impure thoughts are forbidden. I felt myself called often in childhood to obey a law as much above my actual state as the heavens are higher than the earth. I fell early into a habit of self-examination. Do I love God? No. Do I love the neighbor? No. Am I fit for heaven? No. And so there was a haunting feeling that I was hurrying along a downward road sure to end in a precipice and a burning lake. There were kind and gentle admonitions, there were tender and loving appeals, there were gracious invitations from without and from within; but the prevailing appeal was to fear. No one told me how high I might rise; they all told me how low I might sink. If I took God's name in vain He would be angry; if I went in swimming on Sunday He might drown me; if I told lies He would burn me. Is it strange that the dread of Hell was much stronger than the desire for heaven?

Nearly every spring a protracted revival meeting was held. It was in that interval when the farmers could do little work; the failing ice and snow made the wood-roads unfit for sledding and the frost was not yet out of the ground for

plowing. Sometimes the two churches united in these meetings, the zeal of the one like a slow and steady fire, that of the other like a tinder-box, but both mingling the terrors of the law with the calls of grace. I cannot describe my own agitations and palpitations. Why could I not be "converted"? Was I not in dreadful risk of putting off the day of salvation until it should be eternally too late? The preachers gave out the impression that conversion somehow depended on attending the meetings, rising to be prayed for, publicly confessing sin, professing faith, and then joining the church by baptism. How little they knew what was going on in the mind of a small boy! My dread of ridicule and my timidity about going forward were extreme. I often balanced the question, Could I brave the levity and jeers of the other boys, playmates near by, in order to escape the wrath of God at a future day? Might I not attend to the matter when a little older and in some place where I was not acquainted? But death and hell may come any day. Present and awful as was my fear of these, I was yet so sensitive to ridicule and so tormented by it that I actually brought

myself to face the peril of dying unforgiven in hope that I might get out of hell by good behavior or find some method of killing my soul. No gospel would at that time have brought me such relief as a certainty of annihilation.

How little grown-up people know of a boy's thoughts! I was looked upon as a heedless, reckless, perverse, and unfaithful child, whose misfortune it was that he was so quick to learn that it left him all the more time for mischief. Yet I was never long without serious thoughts. Often when alone I seemed to hear a voice calling me: —

> "To leave the ways of sin,
> And yield my heart to God's control."

I owe everything to these hours of solitude and reflection. If I slept with the hired man there was a rattle of idle talk until we were sleepy; but alone in the darkness I dared not sleep without prayer for forgiveness; and sometimes I seemed almost ready to commit myself to the great decision which would be like entering the strait gate and the narrow way of a Christian life.

Once, at about thirteen, perhaps, in solemn

alarm and anguish, I wept sore in the night and brought myself, as I thought, to the great decision. In the silence and darkness I made the promise that I would give my heart to the better spirit that was claiming it and would come out openly "on the Lord's side." In the morning light my resolution wavered and I longed for the guidance of some older and stronger mind. I felt sure of going forward if only some religious person would offer a helping hand and speak an encouraging word. It was my part to turn the grindstone while a young man who belonged to the church sharpened a scythe. My heart was beating wildly with hope and fear. Would he open the great subject, or must I? "Charles," said he sneeringly, "what were you sniveling about in the night?" My religion was a very tender plant and before that one scorching word it withered away. After the lapse of nearly seventy years my eyes moisten at the remembrance of what a child can suffer from being misunderstood. I did not know how to interpret my own religious nature, and there was no helpful instruction. There was not a day when I could not have been reached by love

and sweet reasonableness. But the moral atmosphere which should have been upraising was simply chilling. There was no one to show me the sunny side of faith and hope and love. Even God himself seemed austere and forbidding.

Meanwhile I was working in the fields with hired men who were profane, obscene, and intemperate. I was protected by no firm principles against the exposure to bad companionship. I was conscious of danger, but in spite of good resolutions I felt myself growing worse.

I do not mean to say that my boyhood was continually filled with anxiety about my soul's eternal welfare, nor with sober thoughts on the subject of religion. I shared the human nature that was around me with its variety of occupations and incidents. I was held to laborious days, quitting the summer school at seven to work on the farm; and I remember that during the long winter nights I used to be saying over school lessons, studying out the problems in arithmetic, trying to parse some difficult sentences, or tracing the constellations by the help of a map of the heavens. And the appeal to play with other boys seldom found me backward.

I remember also with more regret that I fell into a habit of reading novels by stealth, the effect of which was to make me full of idle day-dreams and wild, foolish schemes and castle-building. But I also read the Bible through, picked up some outlines of history, and devoured the few weekly newspapers that came to the house, being a furious little Democrat and believing everything that was said against the Whigs.

The crisis came in the summer of 1842 when I was nearly fourteen years old. A Free-Will Baptist revivalist from northern New Hampshire appeared in our country town, a man awfully in earnest, a man of prayer and tears, of dark and solemn aspect, and a son of thunder, whose preaching moved the people as a great wind shakes the forest. A wave of religious excitement was then passing through the land, attended by William Miller's prediction that in 1843 the Lord Jesus Christ would certainly appear in the clouds of heaven with a host of angels and the blast of trumpets which would awaken all the dead of all the ages and assemble them before the throne of final judgment, while the earth would be purified by a great

conflagration and fitted up for the everlasting home of the saints. The new preacher did not presume to name the day of the approaching advent, but his sermons abounded in the same imagery and made a powerful appeal to the terrors of the Lord. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" was the first text from which I heard him preach. For the next three months I had little interest in anything but to attend the meetings, and was among the first to take a seat among the anxious, to confess myself a perishing sinner, to ask for forgiveness and for prayers, and soon after to express a timid hope of my own conversion.

In the meetings where all the converts told their experience, I heard many testify to a clear assurance that God had forgiven their sins. This was to me a trying question. I wanted to receive a sign from heaven, to see a light, or hear a voice, or witness some kind of miracle. I remember that I had a little horseshoe magnet strong enough to lift a shingle nail; I prayed that if the Lord had accepted me He would signify it by suspending the magnetic power, but the

magnet would lift the nail every time. I had read in the Book of Judges how Gideon asked and received such signs from the Lord, and it troubled me that no answer came to my appeal. But whether I got this evidence or not, I was now fully committed; the great and good first step was taken, and my heart grew light and happy,— very tender, too, and loving towards everybody. Indeed, I soon took this love as a proof of conversion. It was a feeling towards all men such as I thought Christ must have had. It drew me very close to those whom I supposed to be the people of God; and I found great comfort in the Scripture which says, "We know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren." Had I received the gift of the Holy Spirit? No wonder-working power was mine, yet I read with delight that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"; and I knew with happy certainty that these dispositions had become a part of my inward life. I became very fond of the Bible, and many passages which I had learned in the Sunday School or at home now glowed with

heavenly meaning, and were sweeter to my taste than honey. I could take it all to myself. Every hour was partly occupied with self-examination. Was I not a new creature? Had I not experienced the new birth of which Jesus spoke? Did I not hate the things I once loved and love the things I once hated? Certainly I had no pleasure in my old way of life, but much in trying to leave it all behind. The new kind of companionship became a passion; I was so fond of being with the converts that it was more than once found necessary to tell me that if I was sincerely trying to be a Christian I must not neglect my home duties for the sake of attending meetings. This was a lesson not easily learned. In the dialect of the revival, to do one's "duty" always meant to speak or pray in meeting; and any hesitation from timidity was regarded as a temptation of the Devil. Indeed, at that time the natural movements of my own mind were often construed and spoken of as a dialogue or a battle between Christ or the Devil on one side and my soul on the other.

The minister preached to the converts from the words: "He brought me up also out of a

horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear and shall trust in the Lord." I took it all to myself. I had been lifted out of the pit, indeed, and set in a firm place; I was among the saved, and now I longed to help save others. While my heart was light and glad as a bird's on my own account, I became very much concerned for the unconverted. I looked with wonder and sorrow and pity on my former playmates, who were still out of the ark of safety, still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, standing in slippery places and sporting on the brink of everlasting woe. But I had no notion of saving others except by the methods of the revival.

Shall I confess that at this time I became a young sectarian? I had been converted among the Free-Will Baptists, and was not wholly content until one fair Sunday in October, 1842, when I was one of three lads whom the good old elder led down into the pond, successively, burying us in the clear water, repeating with a

loving voice, long since silent, the words which I can still hear: "My young brother, upon the profession of thy faith, and trusting that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven thy sins, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Then followed the first communion, and I felt myself safely in the Father's house as one of the family.

But all this had to be done in the face of protests and counter-instruction in an Orthodox home. There was strong disapproval of the noisy excitement in the meetings where we shouted "Amen!" and "Glory!" and my baptism had been reluctantly delayed until I had read scriptural arguments in defense of Calvinistic doctrines. But all my being had been melted in the Baptist fire and cast in the Baptist mould. Quite likely if a similar experience had begun in a Congregationalist, Methodist, Romanist, or Mormonist environment, I should have fallen into the ranks and kept step to the music which first won ear and heart. Whatever was said or done in our church seemed true and good; whatever customs they had were beautiful; and in a little time I could glibly

repeat the arguments from Scripture in their defense with all the confidence of a partisan. The sober decorum and rigid propriety of the Orthodox church affected me with a repellent coldness. I feared the saintly old pastor might lose his soul because he was a man-made minister; he had studied at a college and theological seminary; he wrote all his sermons and delivered them with firm precision. The Free-Will Baptist preacher, as I took for granted, was led by the Spirit. He just went up into the pulpit, opened the Book, was divinely directed to a text, opened his mouth and preached by inspiration, giving us the living word, warm, right out of heaven. And in the social meetings which abounded I believed the Spirit told the brethren and sisters when to pray or speak or sing.

The habit of taking some part in the meetings became a matter of vital importance. We called it "doing our duty," bearing the cross and confessing our Saviour before men, that he might confess us before the Father in heaven. So for several years I was accustomed to attend two or three prayer-meetings a week, and was seldom wholly silent. Doubtless it saved me from

much evil, doubtless it kept me also from some good, for it gave a narrow range to the movements of my mind, a poor conception of the religious life, and such a concentration on a few subjects of thought as almost to shut out the whole rich world of culture and many of the larger interests of humanity. So intense had been the beginnings of this course of experience that gray hairs appeared when I was barely fourteen. For many following years, the outward as well as the inward course of my life was determined by my joining the Free-Will Baptist Church.

The denomination owned a printing establishment at Dover, New Hampshire, where its organ, "The Morning Star," was published along with hymn-books, doctrinal treatises, and other religious literature. My strong early wish to be a printer was gratified by my becoming an apprentice in this establishment. In April, 1843, I left my farm life and the warm circle of brethren and sisters in the plain country meeting-house, and found a home in one of the more enterprising and prominent societies of Dover, a New England factory town of seven

or eight thousand people. My printing-office life, which continued for three or four years, became a sort of religious school. The best writers of the sect became my teachers, and I soon got the run of all that was being said and done in our churches, besides making some acquaintance with the general movements of Christendom. If not the best sort of school, yet certainly it was not the worst, and it fell exactly in line with the new order of my life and its growing aspirations. It seemed ordered as a part of my preparation for becoming a Free-Will Baptist preacher.

Some intimations of such a calling had reached me even in my country home. Within a month of joining the church, I was alone on an autumn day, kneeling before an open Testament, when the unbidden question came: "Would you be willing to be a preacher?" I answered swiftly, "Whatever God wills I will be and do." Six months later, as I was learning to set type, a manuscript was before me which described the need of more helpers in the gospel vineyard. Even in favored New England, said the writer, there is wide destitution and souls are perishing

for lack of instruction; and what shall be said of the vast and suffering West? I was blinded by a rush of feeling. It seemed to me that I was being called to proclaim to mankind the glad tidings of salvation; and from that hour to this the ministry of religion has held me by a spell which no other calling on earth could exert.

It is not easy to analyze the strange mixture of sincerity and crudity which entered into these boyish beginnings of a religious experience, the best part of which, as I can now see, had a living root in my own nature. But the change was very deep, genuine, and vital; for I purposely and consciously entered upon the path of a better life. I vowed with all my heart and soul and mind and strength that I would forever be obedient to the will of God, and this consecration was not the less real because my thinking about it was mixed with childish superstitions.

I have sometimes been amused in recalling my own childish theory of spiritual things, which now seems quite irrational and partly false. But the change which I have described, and which is commonly called conversion, has

always seemed to me very real, genuine, and wonderful — a process at once helped and hindered by the mixture of truth and error in my early instruction. The truth remains inexpressibly precious; to eliminate the error has been a long and painful struggle. Of this there will be more to say.

But how do I now explain the change? I think that, with my growing years, reason and conscience, and the native sense of reverence and duty, unfolded as naturally as a garden blossoms. But a boy is an animal, and these higher principles and finer forces met with resistance from lower impulses and coarser habits, so that inward discomfort and conflict were inevitable. The better life could no more establish itself without struggle than a bird can hatch without breaking the shell. In every serious moment I felt the difference between what I was and what I ought to be, and was filled with self-reproach.

But how came there to be any conflict between the higher and lower principles, if both were properly a part of my nature? Does not such conflict prove natural depravity? It certainly proves that there is a non-moral or un-

spiritual part of our being; and it is likely also that we all inherit unbalanced and disorderly tendencies, just as we inherit bodily imperfections which disturb health and predispose to disease. For instance, the appetite of a child can rarely be a safe guide; let him eat whatever he likes and all he likes and it will be worse for him. But even with inherited hankering for alcohol, or with natural weakness of lungs, heart, or digestive organs, if he will but practice self-denial, avoiding all that hurts and using all that helps, he may build up a vigorous constitution. You do not say his body is totally depraved; you say that these lower conditions must be overcome by the vital forces. There is a conflict, and victory is gained when healthy tendencies are established. Health is natural; so is true religion.

Within myself as a boy there was a love of praise and a dread of ridicule stronger than the sense of truth and duty. The fear of punishment, too, was stronger than any moral motive. Both at home and at school the rod was in frequent use, and I often yielded to the cowardly temptation to hide faults by falsehood.

I was easily made angry; and many an impulse of self-will and self-indulgence proved stronger than the voice of reason or the power of self-restraint. For a long time the battle between conscience and these lower tendencies was fought at a disadvantage. But by giving up the throne of my heart to the higher principles, I seemed to have secured and welcomed reinforcements from heaven. There came a time when I turned my face upward toward light and goodness, and so left darkness and evil behind.

One cannot speak of such a crisis without gratefully recognizing the heavenly help. I had been taught to think of this as a miracle of divine interference; but now it seems as natural as sunshine and the warm breath of spring. As now seen, the inward movements of my mind and heart came to me as a sign of gracious influence, and as a proof that the Power which made me kept making me, and was never for a moment absent even when farthest from my thought. The change which I still call conversion seems now to have been as natural, as divinely natural, as the change which comes over one's body when he sleeps off his weariness,

when he feeds and forgets his hunger, or when he recovers from headache or heartache. "He healeth all thy diseases, He forgiveth all thine iniquities." There was a stirring in my childish mind which I did not quite understand, but which was like the stirring of life in a seed. I heard no voice, yet I was inly taught; I saw no light, yet the way grew clear. Why not call it a voice, a light, and a work of grace? The power that stirred in reason and conscience was not mine; it was the power that gave me life, still working within, to give me higher life; as natural as the opening of a bud, yet as supernatural as the creation of a world.

But there was nobody to tell me what it meant. Instead of gently explaining these inward movings and longings as a part of my growth, my teachers set me to watching and praying for some miracle, some non-natural interference which would remake me without using any of the old material of my being. Instead of becoming a new creature in Christ by being simply a wiser and better boy, I was to die, as it were, and come to life again as another boy. There was a deep truth in this, but it

was distorted and served up in such a way as to make it almost ghastly. I must be converted or lost forever, yet I dreaded being converted as I should have dreaded a surgical operation.

Such hard doctrines lay heavily upon me, like a stone on a seed. Yet these crude ways of thinking did not wholly prevent or wholly pervert the natural processes by which the divine life forms itself in the human life. The good seed grows by its own inborn vitality and by the friendly climate, even though the gardener may have a false theory of botany and a faulty method of culture. The current religious teaching both helped and hurt me. The lurid theology and the hothouse forcing process of revivalism produced an unbalancing and dangerous development of the emotions, and I was near to mistaking these emotions for religion itself. Within a narrow circle of ideas my mind became intensely active. My newborn happiness was so closely associated with these ideas that they assumed for me the authority of full and final revelation. The spiritual life principle shot up slenderly. I cannot be too thankful that its roots struck into the ground of

reality. My love for the church which I had joined and my dependence on its warm atmosphere of fellowship disposed me to regard its doctrine as infallible. I did not know enough to say, — these doctrines may be partly true, but the whole truth must be much larger. I took the crude exhortations of the brethren and sisters at the prayer-meetings, the wild hymns we sung, and the shouts of "Amen!" and "Glory!" as expressions of real New Testament piety and as foreshadowings of the worship of heaven. Yet I may still say, "He set my feet on a rock; He established my goings."

Chapter II

HOW I BECAME A PREACHER

BEFORE I was fifteen, it was definitely settled in my own mind that I was to be a preacher. As hitherto I had been looking for the guidance of impressions, I now began to look for light. My readings and reflections on religious subjects had ever had an element of study. The denominational paper in whose office I was working as a printer was partly devoted to the advocacy of ministerial education, and I soon got over the notion that it was wrong to prepare for the work of the ministry, though I had a very narrow and shallow conception of what such preparation ought to be. I got into the habit of arranging my own poor little thoughts, and trying to express them in the best way in the social meetings.

I heard much said about a "call to preach," and was greatly exercised over the question whether I had received such a call. No Free-Will Baptist minister was supposed to take such

a work upon himself; it was laid upon him by the Divine Spirit. To pursue the ministry as a profession or trade was regarded as profanation or impiety. The printing establishment was the headquarters of the denomination, and the resort of many of its leading preachers. To me they were the true successors of the apostles. From several of them I sought counsel, always asking them to explain to me what were the evidences of the call to preach. I grew more shy when I found out that some of them were amused by my importunities. But David Marks, a famous revivalist who had begun as a boy, and whose life-story I had read, received me with kindly sympathy and confirmed me in the belief that I had received a call. "Brother Charles," he said, "you must learn to preach by practicing. Save up your best thoughts, put them in your best words, and watch for chances to express them in the social meetings. Sit forward in the wing slips, so that when you rise to speak it will be easy to face the congregation. If any passage of Scripture opens its meaning to your own mind, make public use of it and give the comment which has been helpful to

yourself." For years I followed this advice, often two or three times a week.

Among the journeymen printers was one young man who was earning the means for collegiate theological study, and who was on his way to the pulpit. By his advice I entered on serious reading, and by the help of what I had already learned in the country school, found it possible to follow a certain course of self-instruction. A part of my last year in the printing-office I arranged to pay my board by three hours' work a day and so gained leisure for a careful review of the common branches. I ought also to say that the work of compositor and proof-reader was of great advantage, enlarging my little vocabulary and supplying a constant though unconscious drill in the correct use of language.

I enjoyed the confidence and counsel of Elias Hutchins, the pastor of the church, a sad-faced, sickly, gentle, saintly man; and from him I received constant encouragement and the kind of help which comes from the inspiring example of a loving, faithful life. I had to confront the question whether I should try for a course of

study in college and Biblical school or whether I should at once begin to preach, and hope to find further preparation and equipment in the work itself. I had no means and saw no prospect of acquiring means; for the state of my health made me think of myself as destined to a short life on earth, and the inward urgency was simply indescribable.

At a meeting of the church, the pastor stated that young Brother Ames felt himself called to the work of the ministry and wished the approval and sanction of the church. Before granting this, it was thought best to give Brother Ames a hearing, that the members might judge of his gift. I was the janitor of the church and lighted the vestry for my own first appointment on an evening of July, 1846, when I lacked three months of being eighteen years of age. Some thirty people, mostly factory girls, came together. The pastor gave out a hymn and prayed for me. I spoke for twenty minutes from the text, "The time is short." Time is short, I said, so far as human life is concerned, short compared with eternity, short considering the work we have to do. Death is near; the judgment

hastens. On this thread I strung together many passages of Scripture. At the church meeting which followed, it was voted to approve Brother Ames in holding meetings and publicly "improving his gift" — of which there was plenty of need. My little vessel was launched, I felt myself in the ministry; but I also felt that I had put into that twenty minutes' sermon all I knew or was ever likely to know.

My theory of the ministry had been modeled and colored by the New Testament stories of the travels and labors of Jesus and the apostles. I had no thought of settling. Rather I was to go to and fro, warning men to flee from the wrath to come and telling them of the Saviour's love. These two great matters, with some ideas of baptism and joining the church and improving one's devotion by a good life, constituted my principal stock.

How was I to live? That was no affair of mine. I leaned pretty heavily on the promise, "Trust in the Lord and do good; verily thou shalt be fed." Doors would open and tables would be spread. I neither expected nor wished to live in ease and comfort, nor long.

"I lodge awhile in tents below,
And gladly wander to and fro,
Till I my Canaan gain."

I was trained to work with my hands. My life on a farm and in the printing-office had held me to continual industry, and I knew that many of the Free-Will Baptist ministers had followed the example of Paul, who wrought at his trade and freely gave as he had freely received.

Did I enter on this career with courage and confidence? Yes, and no. If the spirit was willing, the flesh was often weak; I was bearing the cross, I was accepting crucifixion. The tension was terrible; there was a touch of fanaticism. The letters I wrote at the time were full of aspiration mixed with morbid whimperings about ill-health.

It was like jumping into the middle of the sea; why did I not sink at once? I did go under many times, but light material will float, and with faith for a life preserver I always seemed buoyed up and helped to buffet the waves by some unseen Power.

After my first sermon in Dover, I revisited

the rural neighborhood which I had left three years and a half before, called my childhood's neighbors together and said to them, "The time is short." It was a stifling summer evening; the people had brought in a few tallow candles; I could hardly see their faces; I could not feel their hearts. I was not sure that I had one of my own.

In September, 1846, fortified by my church license, and passing rich with thirty dollars in my pocket, I set out for the West, that vast mysterious field of destitute humanity in which I seemed to see a world groping in darkness and lying in wickedness. Behind me New England shone like a receding star; before me was night without a star. Jesus had said to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." My spark seemed very dim. Yet my imagination was ever kindled by the vision of a mighty angel "flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and country and tongue and people."

Southwestern Pennsylvania was my first objective point, for I knew that in that vicinity

were a few small, feeble churches of our sort. At Erie I negotiated for passage to Pittsburg on a canal boat, partly paying my passage by helping to load it with kegs of powder for the Mexican War. The boat moved slowly, and often I walked ahead on the towpath. By Friday night I became aware that the boat would not reach Pittsburg till Monday, and I scrupled to travel on the Sabbath. Calling at a house beside the canal for a drink of water, I learned of a little Free-Will Baptist church, two miles back in the country, and regarded it as a providential escape from the danger of Sabbath-breaking. I found my way to the house of Deacon Klingensmith. In response, I heard a voice from the interior saying rather gruffly, "Go round to the back door"; a woman who opened it eyed me with suspicion, and when I showed her my license, bade me read it myself. The Deacon was absent, and she advised me to go on a mile or two farther and find young Mr. Williams who, like myself, was a licensed preacher. The region was heavily timbered, and through blind wood-ways I found a clearing in which was a log cabin and two men working at a kiln of charcoal, themselves as

black as the material they were handling. One of them received me like a brother beloved, in the one-roomed cabin in which he lived with his wife and little girl. Next day, Saturday, I went about the neighborhood announcing a meeting to be held on Sunday in the log meeting-house. "Who 's a-goin' to preach?" "I shall try." Whereat there was staring! Some sixty people assembled; Brother Williams shared the simple service, and again I said to the people, "The time is short." My sermon had grown to the length of half an hour, which encouraged me more than the table-talk of a brother who invited me to dinner and who had evidently heard from David Marks some preaching which he liked better than mine. On Monday I undertook some house-to-house visiting. As I bluntly and awkwardly opened the subject of personal religion, the people seemed either scared or angry. On my way back to the charcoal-burner's cabin, I lay down and cried myself to sleep under the trees.

A few days later I found my way into Ohio and attended a quarterly meeting, a sort of conference of churches, where I met several

ministers, and among them Thomas C. Partridge, whom I had known in New Hampshire. He was about to hold a protracted meeting in a country school-house, and asked me to join him in the work. We both visited the people in their houses, and for thirty evenings he preached and I followed his sermon with some sort of exhortation and appeal. My mind filled with fresh thoughts and ideas, and when he asked me to preach I found new texts. The tide of feeling rose and Elder Partridge baptized about thirty converts who were organized into a Free-Will Baptist church, much to the discomfort of the small society of United Brethren who had preoccupied the ground. So in the name of Christ we introduced a division into His family and planted the bitter root of sectarian strife. My little fortune was nearly wasted. I replenished it by teaching school in a district where the people were divided about the location of the school-house, so that most of them refused to send their children. Through the winter I continued to preach as opportunity offered, generally in country school-houses, and with very few hearers and no marked result

except that I acquired new facility of expression and perhaps more tact in my intercourse with the people.

But I had become painfully aware of my own ignorance. I was trying to instruct others concerning matters which I did not understand. My own experience had taught me the force of Paul's remark about those who have "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

In March, 1847, I entered Geauga Seminary, a small school established by the Free-Will Baptists at Chester Cross Roads, eighteen miles east of Cleveland. And here was my home till November, 1849. After advancing the small tuition fee and paying the rent of a room at twelve and a half cents a week, I had not five dollars left to live on through the term of seventeen weeks. But the atmosphere of the school was delightful to me. The principal and his wife were ardent Evangelicals; a revivalistic atmosphere pervaded the morning and evening exercises; many of the students were active in the social meetings; study and recitation were like forms of devotion, and every Sunday was a day of the Lord. I made prompt arrange-

ments for preaching on Sunday evenings in outlying districts, and my congregations, gathered from the farmhouses, ranged from twelve to forty; I received no pay and few thanks. I was to board myself; Indian meal was cheap; a good woman baked it into heavy bread for nothing; for variety I made it into mush; butter or molasses added savor; sometimes the lady of the boarding-house downstairs would send a pitcher of milk with the playful remark that she had plenty of it and would gladly take some from the hogs if I would make myself a good minister. But however willing the spirit, the flesh was weak; at the end of seven weeks my total outlay for provisions was less than one dollar, but my relish for the monotonous diet and even the ability to retain it had declined to zero.

The good principal took me in his buggy for an excursion to Pennsylvania, where we attended the great Yearly Meeting. There as well as on the road we sat at generous tables and I found myself carnally minded. When we returned, the balance of my corn meal went to pay my debt to Sister Johnson's hogs, and I became a trusted denizen of the boarding-house.

Meanwhile, I had planted an acre of corn, the owner renting me the land for half the crop. But corn bread has never since regained its former rank in my system of dietetics. Nor will the good Mrs. Brown, who once offered me a dozen eggs if I would carry them home after the Sunday evening meeting, ever know how lasting has been my regret that a Sabbatarian scruple kept me from accepting her kindness. The winter following I taught three months' school in a country district of Youngstown, preaching to my pupils and their parents on Sunday evening, and returning to the Seminary in March with ample means for paying my back board bills.

Now opened for me a new chapter. Up to this time I had never received anything for preaching except in the way of hospitality. But sixteen miles from the Seminary at Auburn Corners was a small congregation in need of a minister. The committee wished me to go to them every other Sunday for six months and hold a morning and evening service. What terms would I make? I was shocked at the question and told them I would gladly go and they

might make such return as they pleased; but no, they insisted that it would be easier to raise a definite sum if I would name it. After choking and boggling, I named thirty dollars for the twenty-six sermons, and they were weak enough to accept. I may as well mention here that this was the only case in my life in which I ever bargained for ministerial service. The salaries, large or small, which I have received from a dozen different congregations and the sums which I have received for preaching in hundreds of pulpits scattered over twenty-five states, have been voluntarily proffered by the people or by parish committees. My rule has been to accept without question whatever remuneration came, and to work for nothing if nothing was offered. I adopted from the beginning the principle that it was wrong to preach for a living, but right to earn the means of a livelihood by secular industry whenever provision is not freely made by the people. But whether well paid, half paid, or self-supported, preach I must, wherever doors might open or wherever I could push them open.

Behold me established as the temporary

supply of a regular congregation, in care of fifty or seventy-five souls, to whom I paid my fortnightly visit on foot, walking the sixteen miles on Saturday and returning to school on Monday. My ship had come in; I was now able to spend as much as fifty cents a week for my provisions, when at intervals I ventured on boarding myself. I was able even to buy a new hat and a volume of Whittier's poems.

Meanwhile the character of my preaching was changing. With the same doctrinal basis, there were new outlooks, more reasoning, a broader conception of Christian experience and life. The literary spirit, too, had awakened. I was a happy student, though at times it alarmed me to find myself losing sight of the mortal and immortal danger of the souls around me, and I compelled myself to serious conversation with those students who had made no religious profession. James A. Garfield was one of them; we had met in the classroom and on the playground, and he took it very kindly and sweetly when I asked him to walk with me in the woods. A few years later he was a preacher himself in the Campbellite Church, taking the pulpit as a

way station on his road to the Presidency of the United States.

In May, 1849, at the request of the church in Chester, the Quarterly Meeting which met in my Auburn church voted to approve me as a preacher, giving me a higher sanction than that of the church license under which I had been acting for nearly three years. In November of the same year and in the same meeting-house, I received formal ordination. Though barely twenty-one years old, and said to appear about fourteen, I was henceforth known as Elder Ames.

My two and a half years at the seminary had done me a great service. Despite precarious health and the exhaustion of preaching, I had made some progress and acquired some valuable discipline. My horizon had been greatly widened. I was in danger of forgetting that the time is short; there was so much else to say, so much to learn, so much to do, and such a perpetual charm in the society of earnest fellow students and high-minded, sympathetic teachers. The subjects that came up in the classroom, in the literary society, and in the Bible class all

took deep hold both of feeling and of intelligence. The various departments of learning opened before me like the widening gate of a temple.

My self-respect also was greatly helped by being trusted and put forward in public service. I became an assistant teacher as well as student, and my preaching appointments were in meeting-houses and villages instead of school-houses and cabins.

But, do you know what happens when one sets himself in earnest to the life of a student? His faculties take freer and wider range; many matters begin to look differently; he sees several sides to every subject; he discovers that the world of truth is larger than his little baby creed; he not only finds new arguments to defend his old principles, he sees that those principles may need to be modified or more broadly interpreted, and perhaps he falls into difficulties and doubts and gross suspicions of his own infallibility. There were silent teachers in the little library, books that acquainted me with systems of thought quite unlike my traditions and compelled me to ask many questions.

I stumbled on a copy of Volney's "Ancient Empires" and read it with a strange fascination and terror. It shook my faith in the supernatural origin of Christianity as a strong wind shakes a tree, straining it to the very roots. I had too little general knowledge of history and of religious philosophy to meet with calmness this assault upon faith, but I saw at once the nature of the charge and the magnitude of the issue. For a moment it seemed that all was lost; — God, Christ, Revelation, Immortality, seemed to dissolve in thin mist as mere products of fancy. I was even brought to ask the question, Must I not go into the prayer-meeting and tell them that I have given up religion as a humbug?

I was saved at this critical moment by what the Quakers call the inward witness. Consciousness affirmed the reality and vitality of my own spiritual experience, and thus testified to a larger order. It did not, indeed, prove the truth of particular doctrines; it did prove that there must be some true doctrine of the soul; that man is not merely an animal; and that the world must be in some large way a scene of

spiritual discipline and development, not a horror of great darkness. I saw a faint light: it did not come from Volney; it came from Christ.

I can now read such books with calmness and profit, but this one came to me before I knew how to face the problems and they frightened me as children are frightened by spectres and goblins.

Chapter III

FRONTIER EXPERIENCES

I HAD never forgotten the little groups of churches in southwestern Pennsylvania toward which I had felt drawn in the first year of my boyhood preaching. After my ordination I found my way to Belle Vernon, in the Monongahela Valley, and threw myself into a series of revival meetings in connection with the elderly minister, who welcomed the coöperation. The simple villagers received the Word with great seriousness and the pastor immersed a dozen converts. But the excitement nearly wrecked my nerves, and insomnia drove me away. Besides, a powerful motive drew me to New Hampshire, where, in March, 1850, in the house of my dear old Dover pastor, Elias Hutchins, I was bound in marriage with Sarah Jane Daniels. We were rich only in our common faith and love, rich, too, in ideals and aspirations, in a passionate love of souls, and in a theory of life and labor as unworldly and unself-

ish as the spirit of the New Testament, and our companionship became one of habitual study as well as of willingly accepted poverty and toil. Our acquaintance had begun in a prayer-meeting; it is hardly a metaphor to say that it was a continuous prayer-meeting for the next eleven years, but we little dreamt of the wide region of liberty and light into which those years would lead. We both shared that apostolic theory and feeling about the ministry which has always made it easy for me to pass from place to place and to raise the standard of religion among strangers. In many ways the religious work of the Free-Will Baptists resembled that of the Methodists.

There was a pastorless congregation at Tamworth Iron Works, New Hampshire, near the foot of Mount Chocorua. I had been preaching there about three months at the time of my marriage, and there was no bound to the joy and kindness with which the people welcomed the young elder and his young wife. There was to be a salary of three hundred dollars, and we set up housekeeping in three rooms. Six chairs were enough, and I made some scruple about

owning teacups, as it seemed doubtful whether we should supply to guests stimulating beverages from which we both felt bound to abstain.

How well I remember our first breakfast of bread and butter with roasted potatoes and salt. There was a knock at the door; we looked at each other and I opened to the guest; before we had time to pass through the little hall the table was entirely cleared away. But in our simplicity of living and our thorough use of a few books and our opportunity to serve the highest welfare of a willing people, our life was more than glad, in spite of all our narrow theories. We were encouraged by a constant religious interest among the young people, ten of whom I led down into the pond and baptized in the name of the Holy Three. There were some neighborhood feuds which grew softer and some blind prejudices which seemed to yield to instruction. A few of the old-fashioned believed it wrong for a minister to carry any notes into the pulpit, and at first I tried to conceal the bit of paper which steadied my wavering thoughts. But I grew ashamed of my cowardice and cried out, "If you think it hurts the truth to write it down,

why not burn your Bibles?" My occasional references to slavery and temperance could not have been welcome to all; but as I tried to speak the truth in love, there was never a ruffle of discontent. But the austere and awful aspects of so-called Evangelical doctrines dominated both thought and speech.

After eight months, work in Tamworth was brought to an end by a most disabling form of nervous prostration. Two sermons a Sunday, with extra meetings here and there in the school-houses and an attempt to keep everything at the pitch of revival interest, wrought havoc with sleep and almost with sanity. Typhoid pneumonia set in, and when convalescence permitted I felt a return of my old longing for the West. We spent the winter and the following summer at my old Seminary in Chester, Ohio, my wife entering as a student, and I doing a little teaching, though again interrupted by a second fever. Our hold on the world seemed very precarious. There were times when no path seemed opened and little strength remained to walk in any path.

In the summer of 1851, there appeared in

the "Morning Star," our denominational paper, a communication from Allen Harmon, of St. Anthony Falls, Minnesota, offering a year's board to any minister who might be sent to labor in that frontier field. The Home Mission Society would make a small appropriation. I accepted it as a call. It was no easy matter then to get across ten degrees of longitude; the railroad ended at Elgin, forty-two miles west of Chicago; a day and two nights in one of Frink's old stages took us to Galena. The steamer Nominee was four days ascending the Mississippi to St. Paul. From the northern line of Iowa, the western bank of the river was still a country inhabited by the Sioux Indians, whose unkempt and savage aspect moved my wife to pitying tears. St. Paul was a village of twenty-five hundred people, St. Anthony, ten miles beyond, was half as large; all the territory of Minnesota could hardly have contained more than six thousand white settlers. We were warmly welcomed to a house standing on a hill of sand, which was to be our home for the next six months. There were seven children, and a number of mechanics and red-shirted lumber-

men who took the coming of the minister as a huge joke. The village had a terrible flavor of red pine lumber, red Indians, and whiskey; the settlers were mostly from Maine, and saluted each other as Maniacs. There were Irish and half-breed French; the Roman Church was in the lead; four Protestant sects had made a beginning; the people were taxing themselves on true New England principles to establish the library and the school. Was there room for one more church? For better or worse we were on the ground and were committed to the enterprise in the name of the Lord. Forty years after, it all seems so droll. Curiosity brought to the school-house a few dozen hearers; I could hardly claim them as a constituency, and what I had to say to them seemed strangely crude to myself.

In a month I had organized a church of six members, counting my wife and myself, my host and his wife, a lumberman, whom I baptized in the Mississippi, and his wife, who had been a Calvinist Baptist. The Harmon children were the nucleus of a Sunday School; we got a few others. I visited outlying settlements, made

a few converts and some enemies. The good will of some young people helped and enheartened us; a growing recognition from outsiders made life endurable. I had become a Free-Will missionary, with no capital but love of mankind and a few narrow religious ideas, which I did not well know how to defend from the attacks to which they were every day exposed among people whose experience of the world and knowledge of books was often larger than my own. At the end of six months we were without adequate provision for support and entered with a kind of plucky trustfulness on a life which was not unmixed with hardship. A small sum was sent us from the Home Mission Society, to which the people made irregular additions, but living was costly and at times precarious. We went in debt for an extremely small house; my wife kept boarders and taught a few children, while I worked much of the time as a compositor in a printing-office. We paid for our house and lot, for a cow and horse and buggy. We saved up enough to enable a homesick woman to visit her relatives in New Hampshire, and I think that several poor settlers would give us the credit

of hospitality. But at the end of four years our church hardly numbered forty members.

By 1853 the land on the west side of the Mississippi had been opened to settlement, and many thousands of people from many states were making clearings, building shanties and starting farms, building mills and laying out town sites for purposes of speculation. Minneapolis was just coming into existence; nearly all my little congregation had moved across the river, and I followed. Our little house was perhaps one of the first hundred in the new town. As new people came in, our number slowly increased and the openings for outside work were multiplied.

But to go back. I cannot say that my first missionary work was unattended with misgivings. It required something like self-sophistication to justify the planting of another Evangelical sect and to make so much of the use of water in the ceremony. Consistency obliged me to take the ground that none were intelligently obedient to Christ unless they were immersed in water. This bore so hardly on the brethren who practiced sprinkling as to make me aware

that I had wounded their feelings and weakened the bonds of common fellowship, where at the same time my own people were made more narrow and bigoted. Amid the prevailing littleness and wickedness there was urgent need of love and union among the little groups of Christian brethren, and I was glad to have my red-hot sermon on baptism forgotten by everybody but myself.

For a long time there were Monday meetings of the ministers. We all suffered from lonesomeness and homesickness and felt the need of brotherly kindness and counsel. The coming of a Universalist minister and the immediate welcome he received from many people who went to hear him was a cause of open alarm. We all preached on endless punishment and arranged among ourselves a series of union meetings. The Universalist brother came unasked and took part; and the publicans and sinners came to our meetings to hear him rather than to hear us. He was evidently willing to make our movement ridiculous; we agreed not to reply to him, not to allude to his presence; but the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregationalist ministers could

not quite let him alone, and he was unscrupulous enough to take every advantage, so instead of a revival we had a circus. As a parting salute he sang a solo, —

> "If you get there before I do,
> Look out for me, I'm coming too."

This Universalist preacher was no fair specimen of his sect; he soon fell into disregard and I last heard of him as an inmate of the penitentiary.

For all my brave talk this matter of endless punishment made me very restless. I asked the ministers, "How can we defend the doctrine that a little child who dies without repentance after his first sin must suffer forever?" The question itself gave a shock. The Orthodox minister held that any sin is an infinite evil deserving infinite punishment; God would not be God if He did not guard the supremacy of His law by annexing the highest penalty to every violation of it. My misgivings made me suspect some unsoundness in myself and I earnestly prayed that I might realize the danger of the immortal beings around me. It was in a little book intended for no eye save my own that I wrote these dreadful words: —

"Where can the lost soul find one moment's respite from the tortures of the worm that gnaweth, one drop of water to allay the ragings of that fire that can never be quenched? Not for one single instant in all the tardy ages of Eternity shall hope of sympathy give ease to the soul burdened with the doom of perpetual consciousness and perpetual sorrow, overwhelmed with present woes and haunted by the constant dread of wrath to come! Lashed forever by remorseful reflections on a life thrown away in sin, mocked by memory's echo of Christly calls rejected, such a spirit must continue to sink in a pit which knows no bottom and from whose fiery walls there is no escape."

If one could fully believe and realize such a horror, the strain would be unendurable. It would craze the strongest brain, and indeed it would be a shame not to be crazed. Fortunately we are obliged to think of other things; there are forces and faculties at work within us and there must be gracious influences from heaven which preserve us from our own undoing.

In my own nature, too, there was an elastic and playful element which gave me many

short vacations. My reverend friend, the editor of the "Morning Star," whom I often served as copy-holder, had once said to me, "Charles, you must kill that laughing devil or it will kill you." I went away to weep because I had laughed, as now I laugh to think I wept. For many years the dreariness of my creed made every kind of merriment seem incongruous and dangerous. I shunned places of amusement and never saw a dance till I was twenty-seven years old. But nature would have its way, and I gradually learned to respect the provisions for a safety-valve, especially after I heard a revivalist minister say, "The lambs may play when the wolves are away."

Safety and salvation came to me through contact with men of minds broader than my own, a growing interest in secular matters, and through the part I was led to take in public and social reforms. In working with many men of many minds for general enlightenment and improvement, I learned other lessons than theology could teach, and formed other fellowships than the church could supply. Could the highest welfare of our young community be

promoted merely by telling men that "The time is short," that this world is nothing, and that they must repent and believe my doctrine of baptism? The old tools would not serve for the new work. Petty notions of consistency had made me uncomfortably narrow, but as I joined with good men of all opinions in working on week days for common ends, I grew less inclined when Sunday came to magnify our points of difference. As a man of the church I was being taught by the world; I was being broadened and liberalized without knowing it. So whenever I went back a little and tried to say the old thing, it seemed somehow unreal and not quite fit to be said. But for a time this change was going on unconsciously.

One of our leading citizens was John Wesley North, a man who had turned from the Methodist ministry to the study and practice of law. We were brought close together by our interest in certain reforms, and he had sometimes made me rather uneasy by kindly and searching questions about my religious principles. I think he saw or suspected that my theology did not fit my mind; that without knowing it I was holding

to sets of ideas or principles which could not always keep the peace with each other.

We had a reading club, and when it was his turn to read we generally heard some rich extract from writers like Channing or Dewey, passages never controversial but always lofty, reasonable, helpful, not easily adjustable to my ordinary ways of thinking. I could say nothing against matter or manner, yet I was affected like one who goes with weak eyes into a strong light. I was half afraid the light was the blaze from the pit, for certainly these writers did not use the dialect which I called Evangelical; still I was fascinated and could not withhold my praise. Would I like to borrow a volume or two? My friend would gladly lend. Coward that I was, I dared not read an unauthorized book. Volney had nearly upset me once; what might Channing do?

But thus I was learning, at once to my cost and to my enrichment, that there were other ways of looking at life and at truth, other ways of thinking about God and man, other ideals of conduct and character. The time was coming, though still years away, when my eyes would

bear a stronger light, and when I could screw my courage to the sticking place of him who said, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Meanwhile my friend was encouraging me to believe that a Christian soldier might trust the armor of righteousness on battle-fields more urgent and more exposing than those of theology.

But there was a deeper cause. I was among a people who had come to the new land with the laudable desire to make homes for their families and to improve their fortunes. It was necessary and right that they should be This-worldly, and I was trying to make them Other-worldly. Even if I did not go into needless antagonism with their proper secular activities, I did not meet them with sympathy or tact. "Mr. Ames," said a young man, "if we lived as you preach, there would never be a railroad or a steamboat built in this territory" — a kind of criticism which made me very thoughtful; the more so, perhaps, as I had to make my own way like the rest in order to gain and keep some sort of footing on the planet; and when it came to building a house myself, it was not possible to think and speak of nothing but heaven and hell.

The conditions of frontier life schooled me to more practical views. There was much sickness caused by disorderly living and much domestic misery and woe from the prevailing habit of intemperance. Almost before I knew it, my methods of work were modified by impulses of humanity and public spirit. Every few weeks some dreadful tragedy was caused by whiskey; the better sort of people became concerned and excited. We held many local meetings and some large conventions; I became secretary of a territorial temperance society and was honored by the hatred of the saloon-keepers. I drafted a bill for a prohibitory law, which was adopted by the legislature with a clause submitting it to a popular vote. There was a brisk canvass; I spoke in every prominent settlement; and when the votes were counted we had a large majority. About two thirds of the liquor dealers submitted and closed their shops, but there was a bitter irritation. Then the courts decided that the legislature could not delegate its power to the people; so we lost the law, not because it was unconstitutional, but because the method of adopting it was unconstitutional. Before

another year there was a great increase of population and the public mind was occupied with other questions.

About this time my equipoise was disturbed by the anti-slavery agitation. I was an ardent little Abolitionist as well as an ardent little Baptist. Years before, back in Ohio, where William Lloyd Garrison was thundering against slavery, I had heard him with applauding heartbeats. He arraigned the churches for their indifference to "the sum of all vileness." "While men, women, and children were bought and sold like cattle, the law of brotherhood being trodden under foot and the Golden Rule treated as a nullity, what are Christians doing? They are debating how water shall be used in a religious ceremony." I never got over this sharp contrast between ritual and righteousness.

The Free-Will Baptists had taught me to be an ardent opponent of slavery as well as of intemperance, and in a small way I became an agitator. In 1854 I was the secretary of a convention called to protest against the passage of the Kansas and Nebraska Bill, which threw open the new territories to slavery. A little later

the anti-slavery and temperance people made up a purse to buy a printing-press, which was soon put under my charge, and I became the editor of the "Minnesota Republican," which I believe was the first paper in the Northwest to declare for the organization of the party which six years later made Abraham Lincoln President of the United States. In the spring of 1855, when a territorial organization was effected, I had a part in the framing of the platform, much to the disgust of the practical politicians, who preferred silence on the subject of prohibition, free trade, and Know-nothingism. The editorial chair became an extension of the pulpit; and I can truly say that I never printed a paper or a paragraph on which I could not ask the divine blessing. The man who declared that my paper was not "worth a damn" differed in opinion from several other profane citizens.

Charles Sumner, who happened to be visiting Minnesota, kindly came to offer counsel. He urged me not to press the prohibition issue until the slavery question could be settled. I was not convinced, but the current of events

enforced his advice. I could make mischief only for a little while; the great topic of slavery monopolized attention, nor could it be laid on the table till decided ten years later at Appomattox.

Chapter IV

MY THEOLOGICAL CRISIS

JOHN WESLEY NORTH, who recently died in California at the age of seventy-five, had been a lawyer of distinction, having been appointed by President Lincoln in 1861 as one of the judges of the supreme court of Nevada Territory. Ten years earlier, when I went to Minnesota as a Free Baptist missionary, he was already well established at St. Anthony's Falls in the practice of his profession. He was a man of ardent public spirit and out-speaking freedom, and we were drawn together by our common interest in reforms, especially in temperance and anti-slavery. Being several years my senior, his personal friendship was of great practical value, and my wavering confidence in myself was helped by his generous recognition. It was he who first approved my draft of a prohibitory law; he encouraged my coming forward prominently in various public functions, and nominated me later for the editorial position to which

I was chosen. I think that from the first he recognized in my preaching, behind the theology he had rejected, a humanitarian tone and a certain sympathy with social improvement and progress. Though he avoided controversy, he made me aware that there was more than one way of looking at religious subjects, and the quiet scorn with which he once referred to my stiff sermon on immersion as the only baptism fit for a Christian awakened a suspicion that I had not done a very large thing after all. As I have before mentioned, for a while we belonged to a reading circle which brought together some of the brightest and pleasantest people of our frontier village. I listened in silent wonder to some large and luminous views of God and destiny, but felt that these views were somehow out of keeping with our Evangelical way of putting things. Had not Paul warned us that Satan himself appears as an angel of light? Perhaps these were his emissaries, yet I could not question the influence of their teachings. My friend saw that I was interested. He was willing to lend this volume or that if I cared to read. Some time, perhaps, but not just now, I said.

In truth, I was afraid of such reading. These heretics carried too many guns and too heavy ones for me to cope with, and they were all the more dangerous because so brilliant, charming, and plausible.

I had some reason for timidity, remembering Volney's "Ruins" and how it had come near making a ruin of me. For a time I had well-nigh lost faith and hope, for I knew not how to reply to the learned writer who saw in Christianity only one among many superstitions. My little boat was too frail to be on the wide waters of free inquiry. But who can arrest the growth of his own mind or stay the advancing light of the morning? Whatever I read or heard seemed to suggest larger interpretations of the universe, though I still tried to construe every new fact or principle into harmony with my childish traditions. But the questions were not so easily disposed of. The doctrine of eternal punishment seemed to rest firmly on the authority of proved texts, but not so in a mind that must constantly ask for reasons. From the pulpit I said sin is an infinite evil; it violates the law of infinite justice; it offends the Infinite Being who must

smite it with infinite penalty. But in solitude I asked, Can a finite creature commit infinite wrong and incur infinite guilt? I brought the question up at our ministers' meeting. Can we vindicate our doctrine on grounds of reason and justice? Take a child just old enough to distinguish right from wrong, just old enough to cross the line of responsibility permitted by inherited tendencies; the first moral act of that child is wrong. What if the child dies unrepentant, unforgiven; can we show that it is just for the Creator to punish that child forever and ever? The only concession came in the admission that for such little sinners the fire might be less hot. But when, not long after, at the funeral of a baby whose parents were not professed Christians, the minister told them that, if the little one had been saved, which he seemed to doubt, it was not because they had ever prayed for it, a sensation of pain and anger went through the community. I was not hunting for problems; problems seemed to be hunting me. Wendell Phillips had said that the education of affairs is broader, deeper, and more real than that which school or college can give,

and I was increasingly mixing in affairs. All my theories, in which much dream-stuff was mixed, had to be tested by the experiences and activities of frontier life. How would they work with other men in the actual experiences? How would they bear the daylight of public examination? I was obliged to rethink every night, and to look over my small stock of boyish notions with the eyes of a grown-up man in lively contact with other men. I soon found myself like a lad who still wears the garments he is outgrowing, and who feels himself at once pinched and half covered. Still living inside these earlier notions, my mind was rapidly expanding beyond them in all directions.

Ordinarily in an old, settled parish the preacher has it pretty much all his own way so long as he follows his traditional routine. He preaches, and the people silently assent or accept, or if they dissent or reject, he hears very little about it; but in the West and on the frontier, if he stirs round a little, he must expect to meet with the frankest criticism and questioning. When a Californian preacher spoke of Tom Paine as in hell, a rough man in the congregation rose and

shook in his face a handful of gold: "Prove that, and the money is yours." Every doctrine which I tried to teach was challenged by somebody, and I was continually meeting intelligent people who put me on the defensive and compelled me to self-questioning.

It seems ludicrous enough now, but one of my serious problems was how to account for goodness outside of the churches. I had great respect for a righteous man, but a general suspicion that none were righteous save those who were called Christian believers. It was easy enough to account for badness inside the Church, for hypocrisy is always possible, and there may be black sheep in every flock; but how can any souls be white that have not passed through the washing of regeneration? I was half saddened by the healthy virtue and beautiful life of many a man and woman who did not believe in our Evangelical religion.

When I looked into my own heart and could credit myself with a sincere desire to be right and to do right, I was accustomed to say, This is the work of grace, this is the fruit of the spirit, this comes from believing in Christ. When my

unevangelical neighbor gave proof of the same desire to be right and to do right, what business had I to say, His inspiration comes from below, mine from above? Had not Jesus said, "You shall know them by their fruits"? And when His enemies charged Him with casting out evil spirits by being in league with the Devil, had He not said, "Take care! You may say anything you please against me, but beware that you do not sin against the Holy Spirit, by attributing good works to a bad source"? It was a happy day when I dared to say, Genuine goodness is of one stuff whether it be in believer or atheist. It is God's work, even in the man who does not know where his inspiration comes from. I had some cause to be dissatisfied with the moral effects of our preaching, and ashamed of my own part in it. It did indeed bear fruit, but it seemed to produce a narrow zeal which made men selfish about salvation or more earnest for the Church, with its doctrines and usages, with no corresponding increase of their value as members of society. Was I propagating a religion partly true and partly false? We were infected not only by narrowness, bigotry, and sectarian

feeling, but by a pernicious and poisonous conceit of being better and safer than other men, not because of a better life, but because we were the Lord's people. When we spoke of saints, we generally meant church members; when we spoke of sinners, we meant non-believers.

If my theology pinched me, so did my church relationship. I began to be aware of restrictions upon my natural and reasonable freedom of thought and conduct. To keep in good standing one must conform and run in the grooves of church usage or else there was friction. Sometimes our covenant engagement to watch over each other gave rise to a kind of personal espionage, and compelled us to do things that outside sinners might call mean. I learned how far this might be carried when one of the brethren came to me in solemn concern to speak about my extravagance in the use of money. The little church was paying me almost two hundred dollars a year; he helped to raise it, and thought he ought to have a voice in the matter of spending it. He knew what I did not know about my wife's dresses; he had observed that I bought a hand-saw and a spade. He had carried on a

farm without ever owning a spade; why should I buy one when I owned only a half-acre garden plot? A few days later he borrowed the spade, and I am happy to say it came back broken.

I do not speak of this brother as a fair sample. There was much of gracious courtesy and kindliness among us, much of sincere aspiration also, and there were true and sweet relations of friendship and fellowship. But the system was something like a strait-jacket. Did not I help turn Levi Brown, the blacksmith, out of the church, partly because at the very door of our meeting on a Sunday he engaged to shoe a horse on Monday? Did not I expel a woman whom I had baptized because she became a spiritualist and a medium? Did not a smooth-faced elder threaten not to sit with me in the pulpit unless I would shave my scanty beard?

I thought and still think that the average moral standard of church-going and church-loving people is above that of others. For outside the Church there is always a rabble of coarse, greedy, and sensual people who neither fear God nor regard man, but there is no such

sharp line of distinction as I had supposed. We saints all confessed ourselves sinners; and many of the sinners lived like saints without saying much about it, which made their saintliness all the lovelier. It is easy to say that the worst man who fights loyally under the standard of the king is a better citizen than the best man who is at war with his sovereign; but who had the right to say that the crooked professor was a soldier of Christ, while the pure-minded unbeliever was an enemy?

The moral instincts of mankind go deeper than professions. The hardest-faced and tightest-fisted money-lender at St. Anthony was a noisy church member. It was reported that in one of the religious meetings he prayed for "greater interest in heaven." Whereupon the profanest man in town was overheard to mutter, "Lord, do not give him any greater interest; he gets five per cent a month here." I think the general feeling went with the profanest man in town, and that his prayer rose quite as high as the other. It plagued me that when I wanted to raise a little money to get a wooden leg for a cripple, the dollars came from the sinners

and the dimes from the saints. Meanwhile I was getting a little knowledge of religious history, and was surprised to see that there had been a great deal of bad business done in the name of the Lord; that the Church had been responsible for much of wrong and shame and crime; that the path of progress had been obstructed by men sound in the faith, and often cleared by those who had been branded as heretics. Protestants were ready to charge this upon Romanists. It saddened me to find our own records not wholly clear.

I grew ashamed of my own sectarianism; I had loved one little denomination better than all others. There might be no wrong in this, but there lurked in the background a theory that my own narrowness represented the sentiments of the Lord Himself. As I kept discovering good people of other names, and of no name, there awoke a passionate desire for a more inclusive fellowship, for a Church broad enough to hold all faithful people, or certainly all true Christians. We took in only those who would submit to immersion, and to justify this exclusiveness I had been laying much stress on the form

of the baptismal ceremony. Perhaps on that small matter we were nearer right than others, but I got ashamed of giving my congregation the impression that we were, therefore, better Christians. In time it became a great question with me, What is the true basis of the Christian Church, — doctrines? ordinances? professions? No, we all agreed that character was the main thing, that neither here nor hereafter could one be accepted without purity of heart; yet all the time were we not talking and acting as if something else were more important than character? For instance, we were refusing church fellowship to some excellent Christians because they did not agree with us about doctrine and ordinances, and we were extending church fellowship to some rather shabby Christians because they did so agree. I grew ashamed of that. Moreover, I felt in a blind way that there was a conflict between my theories of religion and my growing ideals of complete life and manliness. Perhaps phrenology had given me the idea that man's own being is divinely organized, that every faculty and sentiment which is proper to our nature should be cherished and allowed

to play a part in character; that in trying to suppress self-esteem, acquisitiveness, mirthfulness, and the dramatic faculty, and also in treating man's reason as a dangerous enemy to true faith, we might be running counter to the wisdom of the Creator who had begotten these qualities in His human children.

I had to ask another question. In trying to live literally according to the Good Book, were we not working against the grain and absurdly seeking to reproduce in America a type of life and character which existed eighteen hundred years before in Palestine? Personally I had been cruelly trying to force myself against the nature God had given me into a mystical and contemplative religion like that of the Orientals, and at the same time to fill a worthy place and do a worthy work here in the nineteenth century. Somehow the two things would not fit together.

Struggling up from the depths of the mind were doubts and questions concerning the authority on which my doctrines were supposed to rest. Like the other preachers, I was accustomed to say the Bible contained the truth,

the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Was it an evil spirit or a good spirit which plumped at me such questions as these: How do you know that? Have you a right to say it unless you can verify it? and, Have you fairly looked into the matter? My reading had broadened a little, and I had early formed a habit of reading slowly and thinking everything over. This was my substitute for the college. Hitherto I had opened the Bible for two purposes; taking for granted that it was God's literal word. I had read it unquestioningly as a book of religion and guide of life, — the one principal light on the path in which I ought to walk; next I had consulted it as a textbook, an authority on all matters of principle. If I had God's Word for a doctrine, that was the end of it: "He that doubteth is damned." I even fear I was so strongly biased that I searched the Book less to learn its real teaching than to confirm notions already accepted, notions bound up with my hopes of eternal salvation.

But in the light of larger knowledge and with the use of riper faculties, the aspect of the Scriptures underwent a change. I grew less con-

fident that I was on the Scriptural basis, less confident also that the Scripture itself contained the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I was assailed with new questions and new possible constructions. First the writers did not seem to claim the kind of inspiration which I had learned and taught. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, — they do not tell us that God taught them what to write; and if they had made such a claim, would their assertion be adequate proof?

The fact of inspiration I could never doubt. I could not account for any truth in the mind of man except by recording it as in some way a communication from the higher mind. This view seemed to give divine authority to truth learned from known Biblical sources, but it obliged me to distinguish between truth and error, whether in the Bible or without. I said, The Book must be inspired, because it inspires me, but did not the same kind of help come from other books? Some verses in a hymn inspired me more than some verses in the Bible. I was not free to speak of the Hymn-Book as the Word of God. Even if a writing was inspired

and infallible, could I say the same of my reading, my interpretations?

I found myself asking, Does this Book include the whole truth of Divine Teaching, for all people in all time? Is truth found outside the Book less sacred or less binding than when found inside? For example: as a champion of total abstinence, I was accustomed to say that alcohol is a poison, resting this statement on the authority of chemists and medical men. Suppose science should make this absolutely certain, then we should have learned from science a truth not found in the Scriptures, and thus it would appear that the sacred writers were not wholly enlightened, for some of them practiced and praised the use of wine and strong drink. I was at my wits' end in trying to reconcile some things in the Bible with each other, or with the advancing knowledge of mankind.

I was gradually finding out that much of the beautiful morality of the Bible belonged to other ancient writings and was shared by the better sort of pagans. Was it possible that God had been the teacher of other nations besides Jews, that He had given to all mankind some degree

of the same light? Then He was more merciful than I had thought; perhaps I had held too poor an opinion of Him.

To my amazement and confusion I found records of miracle and of supernatural wonders in all the great religions. It shocked me to read of incarnations, immaculate conceptions, revelations, the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead, outside of the Hebrew and Christian history. Were they all childish fables, myths, allegories, monstrous absurdities? Or was it possible that stories grew in Palestine, just as they did in Egypt, India, Greece, Rome?

The horror of infidelity was upon me, and I counted every one as an infidel who questioned the infallibility of the Book. I supposed that all doubts originated in badness of heart. I suspected Theodore Parker of being secretly an atheist, a man destitute of true faith and spiritual life, who imitated the language of religion by a trick of words as Pharaoh's magicians imitated the miracles of Moses by some sort of jugglery. Was I in danger of becoming an infidel? I shuddered and shut my eyes.

But one sees with his eyes shut. I pictured to

myself a child of the Persian Fire-Worshipers, who has always seen his parents kneel before the sacred flame, who has kneeled with them in reverence and sincerity; and as he grows up he reads a book on natural philosophy and gets ideas of combustion, and learns that "heat is a mode of motion" among physical atoms. The fire will be a greater wonder than ever, but will it still be an object of worship?

Or suppose he has been brought up a worshiper of idols. A day comes when he walks through a shop where the workmen make images of plaster, wood, stone, silver, gold, and ivory. He sees them boxed up for the market. Can he ever think of these images just as he did before?

In solitary hours I held serious dialogue with myself: —

"Young man, how did you come by your ways of thinking about religion, and are they fair conclusions formed from inquiry and evidence?"

"No; I took them blindly as they were taught me before I knew how to examine them, or I picked them up by the way."

"Have they been verified by personal experience?"

"Only in part. My experience confirms what I may call spiritual realities. It has given me no light on questions of history, literature, or dogma."

"Can you respect your notions as convictions or principles?"

"No, they are prejudices; that is, pre-judgments, conclusions taken up previous to any judicial inquiry, but they are held by wiser men than myself, and they may be true."

"Yes, but they may be false, and can you go to teaching others that your prejudices are God's revelations, and yet call yourself an honest man?"

"Young man, how came you to take the Bible for God's Word?"

"I was told so from earliest childhood."

"Yes, so is the young Mohammedan told about the Koran, the young Hindoo about the Vedas, the young Mormon about Joe Smith's Golden Book. They are all just as innocent, sincere, and simple as you have been. They are not to blame; neither have you been to blame;

but now that the question is open, you will be very deeply to blame if you do not mind what you are about."

This was an awful dialogue for an ordained minister to be carrying on in his own mind. Was I holding a colloquy with the Father of Lies or with the Spirit of Truth? Does the Devil urge a man to deal honestly and to make sure that what he teaches in God's name is God's truth?

I must tell of a circumstance that forced this kind of a dialogue upon me, a circumstance that produced an inward explosion like dropping a burning torch into a mine filled with combustible gas. Sometime in the summer of 1855, as I was driving alone across the prairie between Minneapolis and St. Paul, I read a sermon preached a few weeks before, at Longwood (Pennsylvania), by Theodore Parker. It was a powerful arraignment of the system of theology prevailing in American churches, treating with great plainness and rough severity the very matters about which my young mind was so timidly exercised. It was like a cannonade along the whole line of my weakened Orthodox

defenses, and I could only answer with a shotgun. That sermon did the business. It did not convince me that all the doctrines were false, and it roused resentment by unfair characterization and almost savage handling of what other men held in reverence, but it convicted me of cowardice and dishonesty in professing to hold certain doctrines while refusing to hear arguments on the other side. Never, before or since, was I so profoundly agitated; I shook like a leaf and wept like a child. I saw and felt the awful wrong of posing as a teacher of religion while unwilling to face all facts and learn all truth—the wrong to honor, to reason, to myself, to mankind.

An agony, but the agony of a new birth. Most seriously and solemnly did I vow that very hour that at every cost I would throw all questions wide open, and hear evidence and argument like an honest juror. Let any man of any creed take that resolution, and he will get into business; it will be strange, indeed, if he does not see every subject in a new light, and find cause for extensive modifications of his opinions.

I fought out the battle with cowardice; I

passed through the bloody sweat of my Gethsemane, and then I stood fronting the cross, for I felt that it would be like a crucifixion to travel the path of duty as it now opened before me.

But almost immediately I felt myself admonished to make no haste in reaching new conclusions, and to be perfectly fair towards old ones. I feared to be the victim of impulse; I feared the momentum of my own agitation; I feared to pass from one extreme to another. I realized the dimness of the inward light and the danger of substituting one set of errors for another; but I was no longer afraid to think, no longer afraid of what men might say, no longer afraid that God would be offended by my giving up any belief or embracing any belief whatever. How often I found myself reciting some lines learned in school-boy days from Isaac Watts's little book on the "Improvement of the Mind":

> "Truth comes to us with slow and doubtful step,
> Measuring the ground she treads on; ever and anon
> Turning her curious eye to see that all
> Is right behind, and then with keen survey
> Choosing her onward path."

I had also learned that "it shows a good degree

of improvement when one is afraid to be positive." But another lesson from the same book now sounded through me like the voice of a trumpet: —

> "Seize upon truth where'er 't is found,
> On Christian or on heathen ground,
> Among your friends, among your foes,
> The flower's divine where'er it grows:
> Neglect the prickles, assume the rose."

From that day to this I have tried to live with a mind open to every ray of light which God lets shine and to hold all opinions subject to revision, change, and improvement. I think a new and deeper reverence must have come into my prayers. Instead of saying, Help me to hold fast what I have been taught, I dared to ask, Help me to discover reality and to put a truth in the place of every error.

I will relieve you by anticipating results that did not come all at once. The sense of freedom and enlargement appeared like a profound stimulant to intellect and will; new bright realms of thought gradually opened and spread out around me, white and beautiful. I seemed to be admitted to the freedom of the universe.

With a new use for my mind, I had come into the companionship of wise and good men who before were names of dread. I got at such books as were within reach, and soon found that gifted and illuminated souls had moved over all the ground I had been avoiding and could help me much by reporting what they had seen, and thought, and felt. Channing came and sat by me on one side, Swedenborg on the other. I listened, free and unafraid, to every voice. I did not part company with Paul and John; with David and Isaiah; I never doubted that Jesus was in the midst and yet far in advance.

But at first all this help was yet to be found through many a weary month of wrestling with difficulties, alarms at shadows, battles with dragons, and pains of head and heart; growing-pains, as I now know, but they almost used up the outer man while the inward grew stronger day by day. I was tortured with a distrust of my own judgment and a fear of going wrong.

> "One path alone directs aright,
> One narrow path with little light,
> Ten thousand lead astray."

My progress along the new lines of inquiry was

distressingly slow. I was occupied through the week with the tasks of editing and printing my paper, and I was still preaching twice every Sunday. Still preaching! That is the strangest thing in my personal experiences. What had I to say to the people? — I, who had lost my old footing, and who had not yet found any firm ground? Yes, I was preaching with great earnestness and with a power which surprised myself. Concealing my inward struggles from the church, avoiding the subject which harassed me with doubt, I could still deal with practical duties and with some of the helps to a good life. In fact, I had not thrown overboard anything which I really believed, but only some things which I had believed that I had believed. The truths by which the soul lives were disengaging themselves from the alloy of doubtful theories, pestilent traditions, and speculative doctrines.

Unconsciously I was getting down closer to the real business of learning, doing, and teaching the sacred truth. My heart burned with desire to help men upward. I seemed to have experienced a fresh baptism of human sympathy and public spirit. My mind, with all its

morbidness, was active and fruitful. I saw more clearly than ever how large and full are the divine provisions for man's welfare. I felt more deeply than ever the evils of ignorance, error, and sin. My faith was stronger than ever for the casting out of the devils that infest society and waste our sacred powers and opportunities. Theology was in the background, philanthropy and morality were at the front.

But the terrible strain of that emotion and labor was too much. My nerves gave out, and I ran away for three months to New England, where I rested by giving lectures on Minnesota, and spoke in various Free Baptist pulpits on the duty of Christians to continue the work of Jesus by trying to remove evil and establish good. From confidential talk with various ministers I became aware that some of them were passing through experiences not unlike my own. In the spring of 1856, I went back to my little church in Minneapolis. They had been having a series of revival meetings, and several children of the Sunday School were received as candidates for baptism and church membership, and, as they were questioned about their belief in

the doctrine of the Trinity, the Atonement, the infallibility of the Scriptures, etc., they gave the answers which they knew were expected, not in conviction, but in conformity. It seemed to me like poisoning the fountains of their religious light with an element of insincerity; yet it was an illustration of the spiritual methods and attitude of the church and the denomination, and it made me aware what a chasm had opened between my present and my past. Had the church receded, or had I advanced? Somehow our methods had grown irksome and unwholesome from a sense of unharmoniousness. I knew it would be impossible for me to speak freely without causing trouble, as it would be equally impossible to preach at all if I suppressed my changing and growing convictions. Many of my conclusions were still immature, but it grew clear that I was no longer in harmony with the church nor happily at home, and I could not wrong the people by putting their pulpit to a use they were sure to disapprove.

But I could not leave without bearing testimony. We had a special meeting at which I offered a resolution: "That the name of the

church be changed to the Free Church of Minneapolis, and that henceforth the only condition of membership be satisfactory evidence of Christian character." There was frank talk on both sides. "Brother Ames, your plan would let in persons who had not been immersed." "Yes, if we are satisfied of their Christian character." "And Quakers who do not keep the Sabbath." "Yes, if we are satisfied of their Christian character." "And would you take in Universalists who deny the eternity of punishment? — and Unitarians who do not believe in the Godhead of Jesus?" "Yes, I would accept as church members all whom I believe Christ accepts as his sincere followers, all of every belief who give signs of being children of God." An inclusive fellowship had become the turning-point of all my heresies.

There was a little debate; my resolution was voted down, as I foresaw, and along with three others I asked and received an unconditional and honorable dismission. My wife, who had never been so timid in her thinking as I, and whose mind had long moved freely and luminously along the tremendous questions, with-

drew with me. We left behind a few hundred dollars which she and I had raised in the East to help us build a house of worship at Minneapolis; we left behind the society which we had organized nearly five years before and of which I had been the only pastor. I left behind the Christian denomination of which I had been for fourteen years a member, and which for nearly ten of those years had welcomed me to its ministry and honored me with love and confidence. I went out of that church meeting not knowing but somehow trusting that a wisdom higher than my own would lead me in the right path.

A little shiver ran over me as I found myself outside the room which still held my tearful people, and felt that I might also be outside the fellowship of those whose worship I had so often led. I was no longer a member of any church; I was out in the cold world; but I had counted the cost, and have never for one minute regretted this step.

The Free Baptists were an earnest and sincere body, and I shall always think of them with affectionate respect. They taught me a

great many more liberal ideas than I was expected to follow out; they cared enough for me to be deeply grieved over my seeming apostasy and to make me a subject of special prayers; but my going out was as truly an act of faith as my coming in.

It is not easy for a man to own to himself that he has been mistaken all his life, much less is it easy for him to confess it to his neighbors and the rest of mankind. It is like pulling himself up by the roots out of the ground which has always nourished him. I could not do it without some inward bleeding.

It is a comparatively easy matter for a private member to drop silently out of a church; but when a minister takes that step he must face some unpleasant consequences. It makes a sensation in the community and there is a seven days' talk, the echo of which is not always musical by the time it reaches his ears. If it was hard to go into the pulpit in the face of the public at first, it was scarcely less hard to leave it in the face of a much larger public. One dreads to be called unstable, fickle-minded; the names of turncoat and apostate are not

counted honorable. Then one who leaves the church is apt to find himself taken up and greeted as a good fellow by a class of men with whom he has nothing in common, men who hate churches, despise religion, and think a man makes a calf of himself by becoming a preacher. Of course, they think if he leaves the church he is coming over to their camp.

But it grieved me far deeplier to be misunderstood by good people who saw no validity in the reason for my action. Bryant begins a poem: —

> "But I could wish the wise and pure in heart
> Might hear my song without a frown."

It has never been easy to face human disapproval, but it would be harder still to be conscious of deserving it. In withdrawing from the church I was simply keeping my early vow of faithfulness — my vow to be led by God's hand and His light. If it is good for a child to be rocked in a cradle, it is also good to outgrow the cradle. It was a white day for me when I joined the Free Baptist Church; it was another white day when I left it.

But there were sober duties before me. I had yet to reckon with the problems of God and the

soul and with my relations to human society. If any friend had said, You have entered on the road to infidelity and atheism, I could only have answered, Perhaps so; I have indeed entered on a road of which I do not see the end, nor am I anxious so long as I see the next step, and so make sure of walking in the light. If the light itself fails, I shall stand stock-still and wait, or I shall go down on my knees and creep, still feeling for the right way. For that there is a right way I am as sure as that this is a real universe.

How I inquired and what my inquiries led to; how I felt and found my way through the next three years, 1856 to 1859, and what a new departure thus became possible, will be the subject of another chapter.

Chapter V

MY NEW DEPARTURE

IN May, 1856, I withdrew from the Free Baptist Church in Minneapolis, which I had organized nearly five years before. In July, 1859, I wrote my name as a member of the Church of the Disciples in Boston, little thinking that thirty years later I should be there as its pastor. During the interval of more than three years I was not a member of any church and was largely occupied with reëxamining the whole subject of religion. Temporarily I retreated to a farm and got out of the reach of disturbing excitements. I continued to preach here and there, to live by other industries. I was for two years register of deeds and clerk of the county. All the time my chief interest was in the great life questions — the questions of truth and duty, and I was also taking a rather active course of instruction in human nature, being brought in close contact with many men of many minds and with all sorts of opinions, practices, and characters.

Could one revise his theology and yet hold fast to his religion? How should life itself be sheltered while one is moving out of a tumble-down old house into a new one not yet built? What becomes of his goods meanwhile? For the time one must live out of doors, as it were, or without fixed habitation. One needs to house his moral life in well-established intellectual convictions, just as one needs a roof and table and a bed; but one can make shift to live without either if he must. One may have a fixed purpose without a fixed theory; just as one may be a true and loyal citizen when he cannot make up his mind to act with any political party. Platforms and creeds shift like sand, but an honest purpose is like a rock.

For a short time I was half crushed and in some danger of being half crazed by the feeling that I must rapidly make up my mind about the true system of religious doctrines. Early traditions had left on me the impression that without exact and settled beliefs I could have no solid ground to stand on, no law to live by, and perhaps no hope in dying. But how was I to reach any settled beliefs? I was like one

who has escaped from a sinking ship in a little open boat and finds himself tossing on the waves of mid-ocean. Would it not require a thousand years to give a full and fair examination to all the theories that might claim attention? And as every question gives rise to other questions, at the end of a thousand years one might find himself involved in new confusions, ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Happy Romanist, who can give his faith over to the keeping of the Church! Happy Protestant, who can take his own understanding of the Bible as the very Word of God! Unhappy I, wandering guideless in a wilderness intersected by a thousand paths!

But fortunately for me and for all, there is in the human mind a certain faculty for spiritual reality as there is a faculty for music. Stand amid the noise of a crowded city — amid the roar of wheels, the clatter of hoofs, the clang of car bells, the tumult of voices, and the tramp of feet; but through all this confusion your ear catches the notes of a band of music; instantly you are deaf to every other sound, your nerves vibrate and your feet keep step to the "Mar-

seillaise," the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "Marching through Georgia." What faculty is that which enables you to distinguish, amid the racket and hubbub of noises, these strains of harmony? Happily for me, amid the Babel and babble of creeds and theologies I could hear one clear and cheery Voice softly singing, "When they say, 'Lo here' or 'Lo there,' go not after them; for behold the Kingdom of God is within you." Some wisdom, higher than my own, continually hinted that the keynote of the heavenly harmonies might be caught by lowly listening with willing ear to the still small voice of the Spirit of Truth.

Many years later I knew a man whose experiences helped to interpret and confirm my own. Rev. Laurentine Hamilton was one of the foremost Presbyterian ministers of the Pacific Coast, a man of strong mind, broad scholarship, and guileless life. The time came when his preaching grew too free for the standards of his church, and being arraigned for heresy he took his hat and strode out of the Presbytery. He became the founder of an independent church in Oakland, to which he ministered for about

a dozen years, dying at last in his own pulpit.

Mr. Hamilton once said to me something like this: "I have been asking myself a question, What is it that has made me want to be a good man? Has it been my belief in the Trinity? No. My belief in the Atonement? No. In the inspiration of the Scriptures or in endless pain? No. Some deeper cause had been at work." That cause was at work when he held these doctrines as true and vital; that cause was still at work now that these doctrines seemed no longer true. His desire to be a good man was just as strong when he doubted these doctrines as when he firmly held them. There must, then, be in the human soul or in the orderly working of man's faculties a provision for goodness. The inspiration of the Almighty acting through reason and conscience must be as natural as life itself and quite independent of intellectual conclusions.

This truth, which I now see clearly, I at first saw dimly; but I saw it and found in it rest and comfort. Somehow I was enabled to feel that the power which made my heart beat without

my being able to decide questions of physiology and medicine, about which doctors disagreed, might also maintain my spiritual life without my being able to decide questions of doctrine about which theologians and churches disagreed. Therefore I need not be in a hurry to settle those questions. While any matter is open to doubt or dispute, one must wait for more light. To force the conclusion is neither honest nor rational. So I saw that theology is not religion, but only a human theory about religion. I had observed, as you may remember, that there were good men in all the churches and outside of them. As they widely differed in beliefs, some of them must be wrong. I suspected that none of them were wholly right; yet they were good men; goodness, then, must consist in something else besides correct thinking; perhaps it consisted in simple faithfulness to receive light and in honest openness to more light. Well, then, I would try to be faithful to my light and let doctrinal questions get settled when they could. This quieted my worriment and gave a sense of infinite intellectual leisure, for doubtful questions might be held open just

as long as they continued doubtful, even if for all eternity. Some of the brethren came at me with conundrums. What did I believe on this point or that? And I was no longer ashamed, but answered, I am holding that matter under advisement; I do not know as much about it as I thought I knew; I mean to consider such questions when I can. But you may die before you decide? Yes, I may die before I can decide. Will it help matters for me to say, Credo, with inward reservations? Does God save a man for dishonestly pretending to believe, and damn him for honestly owning his ignorance? I had a better opinion of the Judge of all the earth, and never felt on better terms with Him than when I finally got to the point where I could look up and say, My Father, thou knowest my ignorance and blindness. I cannot tell which creed is nearest truth nor which church is nearest right; I cannot tell how far the Book contains Thy wisdom or man's folly; I cannot tell what is waiting for us beyond the grave. Thou art a God that hidest Thyself! But I can trust Thee out of sight. And my only prayer is that I may use what little power Thou givest

in learning and obeying the law which must always be right and good. Then I shall be unafraid, in life or death.

In leaving the church, I had counted on some unpleasantness. I was surprised to find myself treated with an apparent increase of respect; for most of the people had considered me narrow and perhaps somewhat fanatical. For a time I was quite welcome in the pulpits of Evangelical churches and as kindly beckoned to more than one ecclesiastical fellowship. But when it was known that I had occupied the Universalist pulpit for a Sunday, there was a sudden end of Orthodox invitations and a coldness in the ministerial kindness.

It did not mean that I had become a Universalist; it did mean that sectarian names and differences had sunk to small importance. I had found my religious standing in the human race; I should have been just as ready to preach in a Catholic church, or to a company of atheists, provided there were freedom to express my faith and hope and love.

A great change had already come over my way of thinking and feeling about God and the

kind of moral government which is over the universe. Some passages of Scripture, some fervid Oriental metaphors, had formerly almost made me feel as if I had seen Him sitting on a high, white throne of dazzling and awful majesty, His locks white as wool, His eyes sternly looking through all the universe, and jealously reading the secrets of all hearts. He forgets nothing; He knows our words and thoughts; He will summon us before His judgment seat; the assembled world will cower and tremble; and woe to the man who has not duly heeded the awful warning, Prepare to meet thy God!

> "Tempests of angry fire shall roll,
> To blast the rebel worm,
> And beat upon his naked soul,
> In an eternal storm!"

One experience had contributed powerfully to soften and humanize these dreadful imaginings. About a year before I left the church, a little child was born in our home and new fountains of feeling were unsealed. All my life I had called God our heavenly Father, yet I had thought and talked of him as a king of terrors. Here was a helpless little creature committed to my

care, subject to my power, claiming my love, yet capable of no return. This very helplessness stirred me like a deep appeal. What would I not do or endure for the sake of that child? The best things in the universe seemed none too good to be sought for him, and from that cradle I longed to see a shining path opened all the way up into infinite glory and blessedness. How did the heavenly Father regard His helpless earthly children? My love was unmixed with any trace of ill will. My heart might break if my boy should grow up in evil ways; but I could never, never be his enemy, nor turn against him in permanent anger. The worse he became, the more passionate would be my longing for his restoration to purity and peace. Love and wisdom might make it necessary to restrain and correct him, to subject him to wholesome discipline for his own and others' sake, to lay on him burdens equal to his strength; but love and wisdom would forbid me ever to hate or despise or harm him, or to inflict upon him any useless punishment. Was the heavenly Father more changeable or less reasonable-minded to His little ones? And yet I had said to my fellow

sinners, "His anger will burn against you like the heat of ten thousand suns!"

My change of feeling was not simply a matter of parental sentiment. It was a sorrowful conviction that I had slandered the Father of mankind whose mercy endureth forever. Very sad consequences might, indeed, follow a course of persistent transgression; but what right had I to quote with approval the dreadful phrase of Pollock about God's growing black with wrath and hurling thunderbolts of vengeance, or converting one of the many mansions of His own house into a bottomless pit of fire?

I had a long conflict over this question of future punishment; but the time came when I could joyfully believe and proclaim that it is *not* "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Meanwhile I was busily using my limited leisure and opportunities for free inquiry. While patiently accepting the slow process of mental growth, how I welcomed every ray of light as if it came from heaven, and how anxious I was not to fall into any new errors! The whole contents of my theological chest got

a thorough overhauling; I resolutely threw out what seemed worthless and as resolutely refused to decide questions on which I had no satisfactory light.

The religious people said, "Of course he will join some church"; but as months went on and I did not join, it began to be said, "Oh, he 's ambitious to start a new sect!" Yet my only ambition was to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. I feared every entanglement which might bias me toward premature conclusions, or hinder my being a free student and willing learner.

But how should one know the truth when he found it? What was I to do for a criterion? I had tried to cling to the infallibility of the Book, because it was so convenient and because it seemed necessary to fall back on some kind of authority. But at length I grew bold enough and bright enough to ask, What was the standard before there was a Bible? Did not the Book itself grow out of the truth and goodness which were earlier and older? The Hebrew prophets did not appeal to writings. As they mused, the inward fire burned; the inward light shone. They

said, "We believe, and therefore we speak." The apostles also founded a school of freedom whose methods came from a Master who encouraged every man to do his own thinking. "Why, even of yourselves do ye not judge that which is right?" Claiming no dominion over faith, they call every man to be "fully persuaded in his own mind." So I found in the Bible itself the best of reasons for thinking freely and for accepting more light from the primal Source.

In respect to religious matters, I saw that men should be as free to speak as to think, as free to say as to see. To be sure, they might talk foolishly of such matters as of others. But were those who appealed to the Bible saved from the danger of foolish talk? Had I not been appealing to the Bible for ten years, and justifying my private whims with sacred texts?

Through all the mazes of doubt and care, I found myself looking for guidance to some clearer light in my own mind; not in vain self-confidence, but in humble trust. For the mind of man, like his eye, is an organ of sight; and the Maker of the eye is also the Maker of light. If

the mind could be cleared of obscuring prejudices, blinding passions, and false beliefs, would not the light itself be a safe guide? When the shadows of night and the mists of morning vanish, may not a man trust his own eyes?

Day after day Abraham traveled across the Syrian sands, not knowing whither he went, but intent on finding the hills of Canaan. Week after week Columbus sailed over the wide waste of waters, ever straining his eye for a sight of the land he had never seen. Month after month I pursued my way among spiritual problems, ever praying that my eye might be clear and my heart true. Almost every day I was cheered by prospects which affected me like discoveries — insights of truth and outsights of good. Even when the light was dimmest, I felt that my face was toward it.

I was kept humble and modest by plentiful admonitions that I was no original discoverer. Other men had traversed these deserts, and left their footprints on the sands; others had sailed these seas, and left their charts for my instruction. The lands which were new to me were already inhabited; not by savage idolaters, but

by thoughtful, earnest, saintly men and women, who had walked in the light before my eyes were opened. In books and in the speech of some new friends I found views of religion which seemed mature, cheerful, reasonable, inspiring, and practical. For they were building on character; yet they trusted to heavenly help as surely as my old Evangelical associates.

It amazed me to find in the Bible itself, and in the higher range of Orthodox and Catholic literature, the large sweet views of life and duty which I had hitherto overlooked. This gospel of character, this power that makes for righteousness, this stream of holy tendency, as Matthew Arnold later taught me to call it, seemed to flow like a river through portions of the Old Testament and New, and to widen to a sea in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the heart and life of Jesus.

Whatever else might be found in the glorious old Book, whatever rank weeds might grow on the banks of the stream, whatever stony obstructions might roughen its bed, whatever impurities of error and coarse tradition might be carried along in the current, the water itself,

the river of life which flows through the ages purifying souls and nations, could have but one source; it comes from the Throne.

But the truths which might be learned from other books and from living men or from personal experience and the normal exercise of one's own faculties, were they less divine and urgent an authority? Might not the method of revelation or the processes of inspiration be continuous as a part of the Universal Order? At first it seemed too much to believe, but I gradually grew confident, glad, and grateful.

So my new world was not exactly the Desert of Sahara, but a well-ordered garden, rich with the fruits of Paradise. Yet I had only discovered, I had not explored, much less developed it. I knew as little of the unsearchable riches of Truth held in freedom and followed out in reverent faithfulness, as Columbus dreamed of the wealthy resources and the wonderful scenery of this continent. Ever since, I have been seeking and finding; still I seek and find; and if this high hope of immortal life be not a mockery, I trust to seek and find forever.

Just what had happened to me? What was

the nature of the change in myself? I came to think of it as a new religious experience, a second conversion, another birth of the spirit. If in my first conversion I had learned to love God with all my heart, I now learned to love Him with all my mind, and to put the two together.

To look at the subject of religion from a new point of view is like resurveying a large tract of country from a new base line. The old maps and plates are of little value. My early concern was for the safety of the human soul; I continually asked, What will become of us? My new concern was for the soundness and completeness of life and character; I now asked, What shall we become? Heaven and hell ceased to be thought of as places or environments; they changed into internal states or conditions; evil appeared as its own punishment, good as its own reward, and the moral universe as a nursery in which all the discipline is parentally wise and loving. Some matters which before were probable or secondary had now acquired high rank among the verities and vitalities; such as the love of truth, the duty of self-fidelity,

the hunger for righteousness, the law of justice and good will, the supremacy of character over beliefs, professions, and observations.

If at twenty-five I had been asked, What are the divine institutions? I should have answered peremptorily, the Church, the ministry, the Sabbath, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Then if the question had been pressed, Is not the family a divine institution? Civil society? Human industry? The law of health? I should have said, with languid interest, Oh, yes, in some sense, perhaps. Now everything looked divine to me so far as it was in the order of wisdom and goodness. When any custom or organization ceased to be useful to man, its divinity was gone. The family and the government took their places beside the Church; honest work became as sacred as prayer. What can Church and ministry do for us on Sunday, if we profane the other six days? Indeed, Church and ministry, trade and politics, may all alike be profane or all alike sacred. All things work for good to those who use them aright; all things are corrupted by the unfaithful and the false. All institutions, therefore, seemed divine in their

possibilities, but human in their uses; therefore, subject to criticism and needing improvement. They are made for man, not man for them, and man has a part in their making and in their perversion.

I had gradually become aware of religious value in what I had once regarded as merely secular; might not all things be tributary to the formation of right character? Were not nature, society, commerce, literature, art, amusement, a part of the appointed school for the education of souls? Thus the earth took its place among the stars. I learned for myself as an individual, and for myself as a preacher, that the true religion is not an importation from a higher world, but that the higher world is folded up in this one; that the human soul is the Throne of God, and that life is best understood when interpreted as spiritual opportunity.

I am running ahead of my story and speaking of these matters partly in the light of later experiences. The crisis came as I was in my thirtieth year. I could not then read my own changes so clearly as I now describe them, but I was looking in the direction indicated, and

traveling this way with such speed as possible. One who is climbing a mountain thinks that no single step makes a difference in his off-look; but he knows that as he rises the prospect widens and clears. Between 1856 and 1860 there was a great passing away of clouds with every month and a certain broadening of the sunlight. My creed grew longer, deeper, and more consistent with itself. While the brethren grieved over my skepticism, I had never really believed half so much or half so happily; and I thought with wonder of the poverty and thinness of my earlier theories and childish thinking.

First: There is a right way of life.

Second: There is light to show the way.

Third: That light must be in the mind of man.

Fourth: It may enter the mind as instruction from some wise teacher or as a result of experience.

Fifth: To follow the light is safety; to turn from it is danger.

Sixth: No man is saved by correct beliefs, or damned for incorrect beliefs; he is saved or

damned by his faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the light.

Seventh: The true religion is simply the Good Life, man's share in the life of God. It is to the spirit what health is to the body.

Eighth: As health is helped by knowing and obeying the laws of health, so spiritual life is helped by learning and obeying spiritual laws.

Ninth: Hence all truth that bears upon life, whether learned from book, church, experience, or insight, has commanding authority. Perceived truth is divine guidance.

Tenth: But as human faculties are imperfect, truth is imperfectly taught, imperfectly perceived, and imperfectly practiced. On the human side there are no infallibilities.

I had, indeed, reached these conclusions by accepting help from many sources,—from books, sermons, conversation, and solitary meditation; in short, by trying to keep my mind open to every ray of light. I was in no danger of disparaging or rejecting the writings which are called sacred and from which I had all my life drawn living waters. And I grew gratefully sure that the same kind of waters were gushing

up from an inward fountain, and I knew that I did not give one drop of it to myself. How could I doubt the indwelling God? How could I doubt that his spirit is the Universal Light, the light of all creatures? In the very making of man, in the faculties and possibilities of his nature, I thought there were satisfactory proofs that a wise parentage has undertaken his bringing up by showing him what is good.

Thus I was saved from any wholesale denials and led towards a position of growing faith by discovering the value and validity of the spiritual instinct in myself and in other men. The very existence of sacred literature served for a testimony to the continuance of inspiration. The cause which led holy men of old to speak and to write is still at work. Bibles and churches had not produced religion, but religion had produced Bibles and churches.

But I also saw that the same conditions which made modern inspiration imperfect were likely to have operated on the ancient writers and on the prophet leaders; or even if we had infallible writings we had no infallible interpreter; or if we had an infallible interpreter, our understand-

ing of his interpretations might still be fallible. For even the Spirit of Truth to which we pray does not wholly illuminate our minds so as to make error impossible. Herein I found an admonition against pride of opinion or finality of conclusion, and that hard dogmatism which is always sure that it is right and that everybody else is wrong.

I was living in another world. Old things had passed away. All things had become new. I had to confront a serious practical problem. Was there any place or opportunity for myself in the religious activities of the time? Could I belong to any church? Could I resume the ministry as a life work, instead of preaching semi-occasionally? A definite answer to these questions occupied me for two or three years. Three things had become necessary to any new ministerial relations, — wide freedom, wide fellowship, wide opportunity. However insignificant and obscure my own function might be, I could not exercise it without freedom, and an unobstructed path.

First, to secure manly and moral freedom to live and move and have my being in the light,

I must henceforth avoid sectarian entanglements. I must never more be shut up in any narrow creed or organization which might threaten to impose limits upon the search for truth or its open expression. This did not mean that I must never more be connected with a church; it did mean that I must avoid whatever connection would restrict just freedom of thought and speech, or would require any allegiance inconsistent with fidelity to personal conviction. At the same time I had a passionate desire to exchange signals with all good men and to coöperate with every form of noble activity. I would gladly have joined any church in Christendom, if I could have done so with no compromise of principle.

Second: I therefore desired to occupy a position that would let me be inclusive and catholic in the broadest sense; that is, a position which would make it easy to be in hearty fellowship with all the lovers of truth and doers of good, regardless of different faiths and forms, within the churches or without, and I thought it possible to include in my fellowship many who honestly excluded me from theirs.

Third: I ardently desired also to continue the ministry; that is, to serve mankind along spiritual lines as a public teacher of the highest truth I could learn.

But what church would or could welcome to its pulpit a man who refused to be bound by its doctrinal standards? And even if I had found a church with whose articles I wholly agreed, I should not have dared to subscribe, for tomorrow, like yesterday, might compel a revision. One day in 1859, in the editorial room of Garrison's "Liberator" in Boston, I heard one gentleman ask another, "Why did you quit preaching?" The answer was, "Because I found that no man could hold a pulpit and be free-minded." Then said I to myself, If this be true I will never hold a pulpit, but I will not quit preaching. I will support myself and family by other labors if I must, but I will preach whenever and wherever I can. I meditated returning to typesetting and made some inquiries about work in Boston printing-offices, but always with something else deeply at heart.

That something else had shaped itself into a message which seemed to me identical with the

glad tidings proclaimed by Jesus, — the tidings of the Fatherhood, sonship, and brotherhood. I was impressed with the greatness of human nature under all its disguises and perversions. At some high minutes it seemed as if the Creator had let me look like a child through His eyes and see how He regarded men, in the light of a mercy that endureth forever, and as a possible heir to countless treasures of love and wisdom, power and blessedness. I saw in the constitution of man the ground-plan of a noble being and the indication of a gracious intention. The great facts of history were taking their place in the large order. There was room for book and creed and cross; for the mission of the Hebrew people and the mission of Jesus. But I saw also that the coming of the law by Moses and of grace and truth by Jesus Christ were incidents in a longer and wider history — and stages in the still incomplete education of mankind.

I have since found a great saying of Rabbi Akiba: "Beloved is man, for he is made in the image of God. It is a particular love to make known to man that he is the image of God." Hence it is as certain that there will be

prophets, messiahs, and apostles as that there will be philosophers, scientists, and inventors.

Could I continue to be a preacher? Yes; and with greater satisfaction than ever, because more sure of my message. I could appeal with confidence to what is in man. The things which had been at work in myself had operated like an introduction and a growing acquaintance with all souls. My authority for speaking was the same with my authority for being alive, for aspiring to be more worthily alive, for hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and for passionately seeking the light that shows things as they are.

I was glad to find that my life purpose and my love for my chosen life work had not been disturbed by changes of theory. The desire to teach true religion for the welfare of mankind, without regard to personal advantage or pecuniary support, was as strong as when at eighteen years old I had dedicated myself to an apostolic career with a great deal of zeal and very little wisdom. But the problem pressed, How was I to find the conditions for my new scheme of life and work? Where was I

to look for freedom, fellowship, and opportunity?

Kind friends who do not see how Orthodoxy can be questioned by any person of honesty and intelligence have sometimes asked whether I had any misgivings, any fears that I might be straying from the right path and apostatizing from the true religion. Concerning that matter I would willingly turn heart and mind inside out. At all stages of life I have distrusted my own judgment and have feared to be too positive. I had misgivings at the time of first joining the church, misgivings when I entered the ministry, misgivings about Evangelical doctrines, misgivings about personal experiences. Unless a man is comfortably padded with a conceit of his own infallibility, I do not see how he can avoid misgivings and frequent hesitation. Did any thoughtful man ever profess himself a Christian believer without sometimes suspecting that he had made a fool of himself? Did any Catholic ever become a Protestant, or any Protestant a Catholic, without a shudder lest he had left the true fold?

Many a pagan has had his eyes opened as

to the folly of worshiping images, and yet has suffered compunction and remorse for forsaking the gods of his fathers and of his tribe. It is related that after Rome became a Christian city, the attacks of the Barbarians brought the people into such stress of misery and danger that they were seized with a panic of terror lest the public calamities might be a judgment upon them for abandoning the ancient religion, and they insisted on the offering of sacrifices to Jupiter. At one period before I left the Free Baptist Church I passed through a deep gulf of depression. It seemed as if hope and joy must die out of my heart if I let go old doctrines; and I was ready to cry out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I think it was like the fright of a child out of sight of the nurse and surrounded with strange faces. Many a time since I have had to go over the whole ground and ask myself whether I had left anything behind that was worth going back for. In the hesitation and misgiving which I confess have only operated to make me doubly careful, I trust that to-day I would cheerfully exchange any opinion or practice for a better one, old or new. How else can

any man retain his integrity or his reason? Who can take it for granted that he knows it all, and has nothing to correct, and nothing more to learn?

It is a saying of John Stuart Mill that "on all great subjects there is always something more to be said." The longer we look at any aspect of truth, of life, or of nature, the more we see in it and the more certain we are to modify our first impressions. But if we walk in the light, if we advance at all in wisdom, new and deeper meanings will constantly disclose themselves and the old will be left behind and forgotten. I had some opportunities which gave me confidence; there were little companies of people out of sympathy with the churches or beyond their reach, in by-neighborhoods, who gave me a willing hearing. In the summer of 1858, on a wooded island in the Mississippi River connected by bridges with the towns on either side, in the late Sunday afternoons, I spoke to many hundreds of people under the shadow of the great trees. My object was to reach the red-shirted lumbermen who never entered a church; and these made a picturesque

fringe round the crowd which often numbered nearly a thousand, and on the Fourth of July swelled to thirty-nine hundred, which was then more than one third of the whole population of Minneapolis and St. Anthony.

Chapter VI

FIFTY YEARS AMONG UNITARIANS

IT would hardly be worth while to treat at such length the mere story of giving up one *ism* for another or leaving one sect to join another. As I see it, the change through which I was led was far more profound and comprehensive. I have told of two great and good days in my life: the day when I joined the Free Baptist Church at fourteen and the day when I left it at twenty-eight — one, a day of unmixed gladness, the other, a day of sorrowful but necessary self-exile.

My first conversion consisted in the surrender of my will to a higher law, producing deep moral seriousness and sincere earnestness of feeling and of purpose. I could never doubt that it was the result of a divine influence. My second conversion, the fruit of years of growth and conflict, added an intellectual seriousness, a passion for truth, and a higher conscientiousness in seeking it, accepting it, and teaching it as the divine guide to a right life.

In earlier years I had not so deeply felt this kind of obligation. I had taken doctrines and opinions on trust, as a child must from teachers, books, and the Church. At first this was both innocent and safe, but with increasing light the time came when I must choose between higher beliefs and the loss of self-respect, honor, and peace of mind.

As we grow in intelligence we put away childish notions and feelings; our ideas on all subjects become larger and clearer. This ought to come about naturally and quietly, like the growth of the bodily organs, and in my case these processes might have been accomplished painlessly and almost unconsciously but for the restraints of theological terrorism, by the pressure of an authority whose credentials I dared not examine, and by the hard-and-fast shell of sectarian prejudice. But the bonds once burst and the crisis past, I found myself led forth into "a large place." I could now use the phrase "Word of God" in a vastly wider sense than the Bible. All truth took on a Biblical quality, commanding reverence and obedience. Every ray of light shone like a revelation. All

human goodness, even in the life of an atheist, appealed to me like a work of grace; Jesus stood out high and large like the morning star, a luminous sample of the divinity that dwells in humanity as a saving power. Christianity no longer seemed like an afterthought, a patch contrived to cover a rent in the moral order, but as a publication of the law of nature, a glorious interpretation, a rich illustration, the best edition yet of the absolute and universal religion which must grow with the growing life of humanity.

Thus my Church had expanded into a whole brotherhood of souls. I was no mere come-outer; instead of living on an asteroid, there was the freedom of the solar system. Henceforth my fellowship could be catholic without ecclesiastical or creedal limitation. I could clasp hands with the faithful of every name or of no name; and I could work with any sect or group of religious people who would leave me free to learn and to do and to teach; I could wear any harness that would serve for drawing the chariot of man's welfare along the king's highway, but I could never again be a sectarian nor compro-

mise the liberty of the sons of God by wearing "one link of all my former chain."

Three things I coveted: Freedom, fellowship, and opportunity for service. Could I find these in any Church of Christendom? Knowing little of the religious world, I feared and yet I hoped.

It was easy enough to find fellowship and opportunity; could I accept these two and get on without freedom? That would be like crawling back into my broken shell. Freedom of thought, speech, and action; it became a condition of personal honesty. How could I look in the faces of the people and say, like Paul, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," unless I was free to learn and to teach all attainable divine knowledge? Every day I met men and women who drew spiritual essence from nature and from experience as well as from Scripture. Did not the average preacher confine himself within a narrow range of instruction, feeding his flock on the old chaff instead of leading them out into the wide green pastures?

In attitude and movement I seemed to be coming nearer to Jesus. Did he not say that the wise scribe instructed in the things of the King-

dom would bring forth out of his treasure things new and old? Then the teacher must be as free in seeking and speaking new things and old things. Jesus, too, had set the brave example; "thus and so it hath been said, but the spirit is upon me and there is something more to be said." While quoting Moses, David, and Isaiah, he read new scriptures in sky and earth and men; he made a text of a little wren; he pointed to the birds and lilies, the farmers sowing the seed, the shepherd carrying the lamb, the woman with her broom, the workingman unemployed or discontented with his wages. Did Jesus exhaust this source of instruction? No, nor did he invent it. It is the fountain from which prophets, poets, and sages have been drawing ever since man became a living soul, and that fountain is as full as ever.

Did Jesus shut men up to his own teaching as full and final? No; he knew there was much to be said for which the time was not ripe, and he committed his followers to the guidance of the Spirit of Truth which is the very mind of God in communication with the mind of man. Thus from the Bible itself I learned to look

beyond the Bible as well as within its precious pages, and so was persuaded that as a preacher I must be free to use whatever is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness; "that the men of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work"; but where was I to find a religious society which could combine for me the blessings of freedom, fellowship, and opportunity?

For a domestic reason I had returned to New England at the beginning of 1859. Entering old Hollis Street Church in Boston, I heard from Thomas Starr King the first Unitarian sermon to which I had ever listened. For a year or two previous, my reading had made me wish to know more about this form of liberal Christianity. My wife had come East a few months in advance, and her letters had been enriched with the mention of discourses she had heard from Theodore Parker, James Freeman Clarke, Starr King, and E. H. Chapin, the Universalist. She had also taken to reading Martineau and Emerson, and her citations from sermons and talks kept me in a glow of interest and expecta-

tion. All these men had become my teachers and helpers, and now I could not only read their writings but could hear their voices. Almost immediately I was drawn into a series of Sunday engagements in Unitarian pulpits. It came about in this way. I was the guest of an old Free Baptist friend in Somerville, who mentioned me to his neighbors of the Unitarian parish committee. So came my first invitation. I remember that after my rough Western experiences, the Somerville church seemed too sumptuous and the people too elegant; there was a mahogany pulpit instead of rough pine boards; in the minister's little room a black silk robe hung across a chair; this, then, was a part of the Unitarian paraphernalia. Perhaps they had a rule requiring the preacher to wear it; perhaps they would be shocked were I to appear in plain everyday garb. I began to put the thing on, but felt exactly as if I were getting myself in readiness for some theatrical performance, some character not quite true to myself. I laid the robe back on the chair and have never tried the experiment since, though I have spoken in perhaps a hundred Unitarian pulpits. It does not

seem like a large question either way, and generally I have had "clothes enough besides"; but recently to glorify a wedding-party I wore a robe, and was amused to find that it made no serious difference.

My occupancy of the Somerville pulpit for a few Sundays led to several other openings in and around Boston, and brought me to acquaintance with many ministers and laymen. How kind they were and how their faces shone, and what handsome hospitality they showed. Besides, as I had for years been preaching for nothing and was glad to do it, it gave me an awkward sensation to hold out my hand for the honorarium.

But I knew so little about their church methods that I was all the time afraid of being put in some strait-jacket, and kept protesting that I was not a Unitarian. "Never mind what you call yourself," the committeemen would say; "will you preach for us a Sunday or two more?" Such a welcome along with such freedom was very sweet. When has the taste of it since grown stale? It was never more luscious than now. But Theodore Parker had divided the Unita-

rians into two wings, right and left; and I soon found that the conservatives were sensitive about one's loyalty to Christ, while the radicals were sensitive about the use of some Orthodox phraseology, so that the relationship between freedom and fellowship was somewhat strained. This was two years before the war, and the political disciples of Daniel Webster were made nervous by any party allusions to slavery. Through callings to do my whole duty, I made a free breast of temperance and abolition principles, and the rattle of my broken theological chains was such sweet music that no radical ultraisms were suppressed, and there were grave shakings of some of the older heads. During Anniversary Week I appeared on the anti-slavery platform and made the acquaintance of Garrison and Phillips. Among the woman-suffragists I met James Freeman Clarke, and made the beginning of an immortal friendship. Theodore Parker had just gone away to die, but in Music Hall I had the joy of hearing Emerson speak to Parker's congregation. In personal relationships there was much cordiality, but in the Unitarian assemblies I missed

the warmth of religious expression so common to the Free Baptists, and felt that the sermons were judged largely from an intellectual and literary standpoint. All the more was I inly urged to testify to the law of spiritual life and to the indwelling kingdom as the evidence of that life. It was from early associations that every church and every soul has been presented to me as a mission field. But my pulpit talk was not of the Boston and Cambridge pattern, and I heard occasional echoes of criticisms that turned wholly on my use of words not often heard in sermons. After two or three Sundays in the old stone church at Quincy, I was invited to stay there as the successor of the dignified and scholarly Dr. Lunt, but I discovered in good time that some of the literary people were ill at ease and heard me with more disturbance than edification. I therefore voted with the minority against myself.

My heart was still in the West, where for the last fourteen years my life had been spent — growing years, years of aspiration and rich experience. As my early thoughts and desires had turned towards Western work, my

impulses and habits seemed to destine me still for religious business in that section. The West was fresh, free, unfixed, wide-awake, electric; more responsive, more hearty; easier to reach, harder to hold; coarser-grained, but more open-hearted, more hungry and needy, at least more conscious of need, and withal tending strongly to skepticism and materialism — a vast and hopeful field. I wished myself there again. The course of events was determined by a trifle. An anti-slavery friend in Minnesota, an ex-Orthodox deacon, wrote to me that he had been reading Channing and finding new light; he had heard from his old pastor that I was all afloat. I made a frank and cheerful answer. Yes, I was all afloat on the deep seas with God and with no fear of sinking; I intended to keep a good watch-out, but with all sails set to catch the free winds of heaven, and with happy confidence in the invisible Helmsman. My letter found its way to Bloomington, a small city of central Illinois, and was read to twenty gentlemen who met in a law office to confer about the establishment of a liberal religious society. They agreed to invite me to spend a month in Bloom-

ington and see what would come of it. I went and preached in a hired hall; and on the fourth Sunday a society was organized for the study and practice of Christianity, with fifty-two members, including many substantial citizens. Then I returned to Boston and told James Freeman Clarke all about it. He was then Secretary of the American Unitarian Association, and I had become a member of his church. He entered heartily into the matter, and though I still protested that I was not a Unitarian and had only organized a free undenominational society, he helped me beg five hundred dollars to carry us through the first year. Thus, almost before I knew it, I found myself settled over a young and earnest liberal congregation in the West. Then came a succession of good, great years of happy freedom in thinking and speaking, of joyous relations with the people, and of growing confidence in spiritual realities and helping powers. Our society was nicknamed "The Broad Gauge." There were newspaper denunciations, and pulpits resounded with warning and hostile prayers which did not hurt a bit. We gradually lived down a lot of

blind prejudice, and in due time I had the satisfaction of seeing the names of the leading ministers of the city attached with those of other citizens to a request quite honorable to myself. My Bloomington Society has lived for fifty years, it is comfortably housed in a building of its own, and has been self-supporting since the first year, except as it received a building loan from the American Unitarian Association, every dollar of which it has repaid. It is one of those goodly congregations which I have gathered and brought to the point of organization, four of which are still living, and able to give a reason for their existence.

I cannot say that I ever took the Unitarian name, rather it took me. It has been said, "There is something fatal about a name; other people give it to you always in infancy, sometimes afterwards, whether you will or no." As days and years went on, I found myself working in happy harmony with this body of ministers and churches; I found myself gradually welcomed, and I found that outsiders rated me by the company I was keeping; and best of all, I found among Unitarians those three great

blessings which I had coveted, freedom, fellowship, and opportunity.

What did the name matter? It seemed honorable to wear it along with such men and women as had belonged to this communion. I sympathized with Channing, who cared little for denominationalism, but rejoiced to be called a Unitarian when for truth's sake it became a term of reproach. It was a name of very broad interpretation as a symbol of the unity of God and man and of the unity of all forms of truth and good; or, as Dr. Bellows expressed it, of the "unitary sweep of all things human into relation with all things divine." Why might we not rally round the flag of an unsectarian sect? If some Unitarians were narrow, illiberal, and bigoted, it might be due to temperament and personal limitation. They certainly failed to comprehend the spirit and principles of their own movement. In general, I saw with great satisfaction that the Unitarian people were working and worshiping together without cramping or crowding each other; that every one, minister or layman, was left perfectly free to form and re-form his doctrines and guide

his life without any required subscription or ecclesiastical pressure, without calling any man master, yet with the large help of individual counsel and a large share of spiritual comradeship.

So when I found that the label Unitarian had somehow become attached to me, I no longer tried to get rid of it, though I never felt that it covered me all over, nor that I was shut up in or bound by it. My allegiance was not due to the name or the sect, but to the divine Cause and Kingdom.

If you define Unitarian narrowly so as to include one theological doctrine, namely, the belief that God is one person and not three, the term properly describes a part of my faith. My little finger is Unitarian, perhaps, and it works in harmony with my whole hand and arm and body, but it is not the whole of me.

But if Unitarianism be defined very broadly, so as to cover the whole circle of religious thought and life in its freest and best aspects — if it is made to mean our oneness with God, nature, humanity, and heaven, then it becomes identical with Christianity as the universal

religion which continually gathers into itself all light and love and life, and leads us along the broad highways of sonship, service, and progress. But then Unitarianism ceases to be distinctive; it merges itself in the sweep of all things human, into relation with all things divine to which every living church contributes. Exactly! I became reconciled to the Unitarian movement because it seemed to permit and favor this high inclusive and truly catholic tendency. For I desired to learn and teach the religion of reality and to cherish its very terms with all possible amplitude and richness of meaning.

Thus I got launched among Unitarians by reason of their good will, their freedom, and my small share in work which they approved. My return to the West had given me a fair chance to try and test my new tools and my new interpretation of religion. The three years at Bloomington, though shadowed by a vast bereavement, were years of growing illumination, self-possession, and heart-content; and I think they bore good fruit in the improved life of men, women, and children, though one can never speak of such work without a fresh

feeling of its poorness, of difficulty, and smallness of result.

In these days there was war in the land. How can I speak of it, yet how can I not speak of it? What man could have the face to call this his country unless willing to help save it? I was not made for a soldier; I never died for the Republic, but I tried to live for it. I was drawn into a great deal of public work, and some of it brought me in contact with many new friends and patriotic people in different states. My Illinois home was not far from Abraham Lincoln's. Before his first election I had met him a few times, and once as a guest at my own table. It was easy to love and trust him as the nation's pilot through the awful storm. The four years of the war found me first in Bloomington, then for a little while in Cincinnati, then in Albany; always trying in pulpit and on platform to keep the spirit of our people up to the standard of patriotic self-sacrifice, and always urgent that the rivers of blood might not be shed in vain, but should wash out the sin and stain of slavery, so that the angel of peace could hover with white wings over a redeemed and

regenerate republic, dedicated forever to impartial liberty and guarded by impartial law. I bore this testimony in Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other cities East and West. I spoke a hundred times for the Union cause, sometimes in camp or hospital, sometimes in recruiting meetings, on the political stump, on the lyceum platform. Sometimes I spoke with a feeling of responsibility, as if I were touching off a cannon, but never once did I utter or feel the least ill will towards the people of the South, who seemed in a fit of insanity to have taken up arms against our common mother. I had never a doubt that their children and children's children would join with ours in thanksgiving to God for the restoration of the Union and the destruction of slavery.

None of us knew at the time what a fearful strain was upon us, for while the hearts of the people were with the soldiers at the front and were broken with public and private anxieties, they were carrying on all the usual activities of industry, trade, and religion. The field of strife was on Southern soil, and in the North hardly a factory, school, or church was closed.

But when Lee surrendered, when "Johnny came marching home," there was a sudden relaxation of the long tension; and through the summer of 1865 I was a sufferer from physical and mental exhaustion. In the fall came a request from the American Unitarian Association that I should spend a year on the Pacific Coast in reconnoitring the religious situation, with the kind condition that I should attempt only such labor as might be favorable to the restoration of health. I went for one year; then I was joined by my family and we stayed six years longer. Having a roving commission, I preached in many places, gathered several congregations, and did what was possible to secure them ministers. The new land was full of opportunities, the people were free of access. I labored a good deal in the interest of public education and social improvement. Life in California was full of novelty and fascination, and I had grown strong enough to enjoy it and to multiply engagements week days and Sundays. After the first year I declined to receive much help from the Association and trusted wholly for our support to the generosity of the

people. One bit of experience still thrills me, still astonishes me. In 1869, I hired the most desirable hall in San Francisco for Sunday evenings, announced lectures on religious and practical subjects; and while preaching in the morning at San José, fifty miles distant, ran into the larger city by rail and spoke to another audience for thirty Sunday evenings, the expenses being paid by an admission fee of twenty-five cents, with an average attendance exceeding three hundred and fifty. More than five hundred came and paid to hear discourses on the origin of the Bible and faith in Jesus. But I was drawn into exciting and exhausting week-day work, and the spring found me again in danger of a breakdown, and I kept away from San Francisco for eighteen months. Then came an urgent request for the organization of a new society, and a body of reliable people were ready to shoulder the responsibility; but I had had a physical warning, I did not feel sure that I could meet their just expectations. It was probably well for me that at the same time came a call to the pastorate of the Unitarian Society in Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia, where for the next five

years we found a quiet Quaker harborage with plentiful opportunities of service among a gracious people.

In 1877, the death of my dear friend, Rev. Thomas J. Mumford, and the request of many of our ministers, brought me to Boston as his successor in the editorship of the "Christian Register" for the next three years. Nobody may be aware of it, but I feel these the most useful years of my life, as certainly they were the most laborious, — for I had never gotten my own consent, nor the consent of others, to give up preaching. Before leaving Germantown I had started Sunday evening meetings in the hall of Spring Garden Institute in Philadelphia. I kept the interest of this work alive by going on from Boston to feed the fires, at first once a month, then twice a month; and when I deserted the editor's chair in 1880, it was my next task to spend eight years in organizing and building up the Spring Garden Society, and in trying to serve the best life of Philadelphia and in evangelizing the region roundabout.

My early notions about the work of the ministry have made it easy for me to pass from place

to place. The strong impulse to become a minister was associated with the word of Jesus, "I must preach the gospel in other cities also," and with his commission to the apostles, "Go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creed." It has not been my custom or practice to wait for invitation or salary. If a door opened, so much the better; if no door opened, I felt free to push. A change of creed did not weaken this missionary impulse, for during these fifty years I have preached in a hundred towns and cities and in twenty different states, and it still requires self-denial to turn away from any opportunity to speak to my fellow-man about the things that pertain to the Kingdom of God.

About thirty-five years ago I told to James Freeman Clarke in outline the story of my early life and ministry. It ran on to a late hour when we ought both to have been asleep. He listened with his large face full of sympathy and his eyes burning like coals. It was a comfort to hear him say that he saw the wisdom and goodness of God in leading me through such an experience to such a work; and when he added, "I

have chosen my successor, I want you to come to the Church of the Disciples when I am through; I do not know about your theology but I believe you will teach my people religion," a deep silence fell upon us both. About a year before his death he repeated substantially the same thing, but despite the palpitation of my heart I was almost sure it could never be. Yet this train of chapters of personal history has led to this pulpit as my last way station. The service of welcome held at the beginning of 1889 seems not yet to be exhausted.

Details have no value except to show that during this long term of work in the interest of rational religion, I have been in a very practical school and in contact with a great variety of conditions and people; that I have been obliged in many ways to subject these principles to the actual tests of life and death. If a free and broad interpretation of Christianity or of religion is unfit for use — if it is powerless to inspire goodness, to build character, to bring men nearer to God and to each other, I ought to have found it out, for I have had a fair chance to "try it out" in old communities and new, and

among people of all grades of intelligence. If it has no redeeming and regenerating power, no spiritual quality to help men and women amid their common trials and exposures, I have had about a half-century in which to demonstrate that it is good for nothing, and there has been ample opportunity to hear the testimony and learn from the experience of many others. The multitudes of men and women seem to move on in apathy, littleness, and selfishness, as if no whisper of God's truth and love had ever reached their ears; but after a study of the evidence this is my general verdict: I am vastly better satisfied with my work itself, and with its moral and spiritual results in the lives of others since I came into this free and rational method of religion and church life, than I could be with my work and its fruits when I belonged to the so-called Evangelical school. Oftener, much oftener, do I hear men and women say, "This preaching helps my life, it searches my motives, reproves and shames me for wrong-doing; it encourages me in right-doing; it clears my mind of doubts and questions; it strengthens my heart to do and to endure, to face life and

death and destiny"; they not only say it seems sensible and reasonable, but they say it inspires them with a desire to be good and do good, and to bring the world into the Kingdom of God.

Please take notice that I am not here trying to vindicate Unitarians or Unitarianism, much less to attack others. The joy of this free position is that it takes away the sectarian motive for being unfair or prejudiced towards those with whom we may disagree; that it favors the widest fellowship; that it makes it easy to honor credit and merit in men of all creeds, and to rejoice in the good that may be accomplished by any church as well as to hold our own church subject to criticism and open to improvement; that it favors our learning alike from radical modern theories, from conservative scholars, and from wise and thoughtful men of all religions and ages. This seems to me the ideal attitude of Christian discipleship. Without expecting perfection, we may yet hope to keep open the path which leads to it; and that method is best which is most free from obstruction. The passion for perfection which includes the love of truth and the hunger after righteous-

ness must have free course in mind and heart. Then one may find his church home where the regimen and diet best agree with his constitution.

Meanwhile I am glad to be a free man among free men, sure of as much sympathy as I deserve, sure of a kindly and generous hearing, yet grateful for discriminating criticism. If the ministry of the Church of the Disciples is to be my last earthly work, I willingly count all that has gone before as merely a preparation for this good service, which in spite of differing accent and emphasis I believe to be continuous and essentially harmonious with the large and handsome work of my ascended friend and predecessor. It long since grew clear that I have more need of the church and of the world than they can have for me, yet how could I dare be here but that with the loyal coöperation of faithful people the quality of this last work might be best, and for that there is no time to lose.

I have tried to tell in six chapters the story of eighty years, a much easier task than to live them through. My life in review seems like the course of a stream, which may be far more

picturesque by the mountain gorge, where its shallower current dashes itself into foam among the rocks or hunts its way among the curves and around the boulder points, but draws to it richer resources and grows more fruitful of good when it reaches the plain, and pursues its calm way through shining fields and villages with fuller volume, widening and deepening toward the sea.

I find little room for self-complacency and much for self-disapproval, but both are lost in the stronger feeling of gratitude. Without wishing to live my life over again, I am content to guide it now by the sober lights of the past and the grander possibilities of the future; and am sometimes more deeply content to shut my eyes to both past and future, and abandon all to the strong, safe, kind Hand which has ever led me by paths I could not foresee, unanxious, unafraid. I walk not so much over graves as under the mild and solemn stars, which draw and beckon me beyond toward a firmament whose depth they hint and hide.

I move softly toward the mystery which we call death, not as though it were a wall to stop

our advance, but as though it were a gate opening to something worth our while to find and worthy of God to give. The Charioteer who guides this globe on its pathway through the infinite spaces, must He not be mindful that He is taking the passengers some-whither — his passengers riding in his coach and by his invitation? and when He gives the signal to step down and out, can we suspect that there is no landing but the bottomless void?

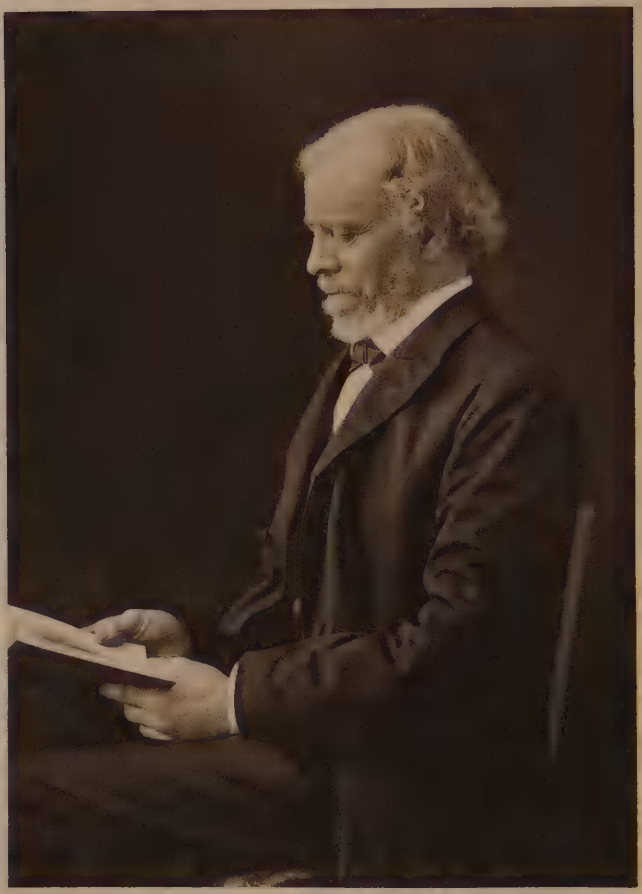
In earlier years the view loomed before me as an awful, threatening shadow; now I await it as the morning of a grander morrow. My name for death is the Great Sunrise. The clearer light will not only show the realities of that Divine Order which we here so dimly see; I think it will also reveal to us ourselves as dwelling within that order, and sharing all its goodness and grandeur. What we know not now, we need not fear to know hereafter. Perhaps we shall read the deep divine meaning hidden in this earthly state, with all its strange perplexities and apparent contradictions. The light of Eternity! What can it offer better than the discovery of God's simple truth and absolute

faithfulness? Even here amid the glare of the senses, does not some degree of that light shine within our minds to show us the ways of Wisdom which are also ways of Peace? To walk in that light has become for me the commanding law of life and an all-sufficient religion.

Epilogue

BY

Alice Ames Winter



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Epilogue

BY ALICE AMES WINTER

IN the brief autobiographical notes which make this volume, Charles Gordon Ames touches almost entirely on his early spiritual experiences, with such a meagre skeleton of personal history as serves to support that story. He desired that only such parts of his life as seemed of universal significance should be left on record. He felt that the things which made him a man and a brother might be a help to all. Let the rest go.

With kindly humor, with benignant wisdom, he could look back on his own progress away from small prejudices, limited outlook, futile and ineffective conceptions of Christianity, into a Christianity broad and sunny, sympathetic and practical, spiritual and satisfying. It gives me something of the feeling of a great soul describing a small one. And yet the two were one, and the greater comprehended and loved the lesser. That the lesser is a type of much of

the religious thinking that still exists is what makes the story significant. Its gentleness and understanding destroy rancor against those who still walk where he once walked, and make it an invitation into open places where there is freedom, comfort, and power. It is not only a record, but a summons.

He was a prophet and apostle of what to many of us seems the religion of the future, a religion bigger than any *ism*, a religion impassioned and fervid but without dogma; a religion of service and communion, radical yet warm, logical yet heartfelt; a religion larger than all church lines, bounded only by human life and human needs.

In his own words, "I became a Catholic, but without Roman, Anglican, or other limitations. I found myself at home in the world of religion, caring as little for the sectarian divisions as a squirrel cares for rail fences and the stone walls in woods and fields. All the problems lay open and I was in no haste to settle them till the light should show the way." "It is among my chief causes of gratitude to have lived in a human world — to have lived with others and to have

shared the common lot," he said in his seventy-fifth year. "It has seemed easy and natural to wish it were possible to know and salute every man, woman, and child in the world, for to me all human affairs have been family affairs, and the doctrine of brotherhood has been vividly real, though it has often filled me with a certain awe in the presence even of the most degraded. Whatever hurts another, and especially what hurts a whole people, has affected me like a personal hurt."

"What is it to live by the Spirit? I think it means to accept the divine as the standard for the human. 'Spirit' is the name — one of many names — which we give to God, and to that kind of life which represents God in us. He is a spiritual being; we are spiritual beings, carrying about with us some measure of His wisdom, goodness, and power, and capable of walking or directing our life courses accordingly. That is, we are made for wisdom, goodness, and power, — made also to advance or grow in these divine qualities. As rational beings, this is the one proper way of life. All that turns us away from this, or hinders this, is no better than

death. This is our only concern, our only interest. Nothing else has any real value except as it helps us to live as spirits; but everything that so helps is of unspeakable value. And, rightly taken, everything helps."

This was the key of his life. The most active impulses of his being were his affectionate kinship to his fellow-man on the one side, and of affectionate kinship to God on the other. These made him what he was: a practical mystic. He never failed to realize the importance of the day, of humdrum routine of commonplace life and experience, of the fabric of society and civilization; he never forgot that the day was part of an evolution infinitely majestic, that the day adds its drop to eternity. To be earthly-minded and heavenly-minded at the same time, not in alternate moods, not in layers of week days and Sundays, but at every moment and in every act, this was his spiritual genius. It is the genius of Christianity, thought, taught, and lived.

Yet, while those who love him will understand why he chose to emphasize only the universally significant phases of his life, those who love him will also wish that we might have had

in his own words some of those personal experiences that made him the human-hearted man as well as the expanding soul. The growth of his mind and spirit away from his narrower religious views of God and man was no more marked than the opening of his whole nature to the life of his day in politics, national development, social reform, education, and literature. He became one with all others of his fellow-countrymen who were struggling to inform their country with the noblest ideals of civic life.

It seems fitting, therefore, to add some slight sketch of his part in all this seething time — as the swift years brought on the Civil War, the bitter days of Copperheadism, the after-war reorganization of society, and the later national enrichment that followed our unprecedented prosperity.

Those were picturesque times he lived through in the frontier days of Minnesota in the fifties, and California in the sixties, and his gift for parable made him translate the events and things he saw about him into terms of life.

"Between 1853 and 1859 I was a resident of

Minnesota on the Upper Mississippi, going there when there were but 4000 inhabitants, and staying there till the little territory had grown to be a state, with something approaching 200,000 people. During that period I experienced a change in myself. I got interested in another way of looking at human life. I saw the broad, naked prairies changed into farms. I saw places where there was nothing but wild waste blossom into villages and cities. This was not all. I saw beds of clay changed into walls of brick; ledges of stone changed into shapely blocks, taking their places in other walls and buildings; and I saw a very raw, crude, somewhat disorderly state of human society changed into a fine type of American civilization — a noble state with excellent people, good schools, multiplied churches, and other fittings-out of civilization. The change that came over me as I saw these things was about like this: I had gone there as a home missionary, with a great, passionate desire to point men to the other world, to urge them to get ready for it. Well, they were trying to make homes. They were creating those changes in the prairie and the

landscape. They were making and fashioning those institutions; and I saw that if my religion was ever going to apply to them and teach them right where they lived, it had got to deal with the affairs of this life a great deal more than I had dreamed of before, and that, instead of talking to them about getting ready to die and live in another world, and instead of saying, Leave the world and attend to religion, I found myself gradually saying to them, Attend religiously to this world; I began to see that their duty lay not in forgetting this world, but in attending to it, and attending to it on noble principles; that if this world was the place where God had appointed their lot, then the best thing they could do was to make the best of this world, not by burying themselves in it, but by making it useful to themselves and to their families, and to those who should come after them.

"There were also changes in myself. I found myself more and more disposed to think about the value of what God has given us for an outfit for life right here where He had placed us, without doubting that there is more beyond;

I began to see that the way to prepare for the beyond was by making the best of what is here and the truest use of what is passing. And so I learned to say to myself and tried to say to others, The best use one makes of his morning will prepare him for the best use of the rest of the day; the best seed he sows in the spring will yield him the best harvest in the fall; and the noble use he makes of the present will be the surest preparation for the happy future."

But in frontier days the man who was only an onlooker and a philosopher would have been a nonentity. The spirit of doing was the breath of life. The little community of Minneapolis, now grown to a great community, still bears something of the stamp, as it remembers the personality, of its first settlers; and in that in-the-beginning work my father played no mean part.

After he had left the Free-Will Baptist ministry, he became the first register of deeds of Hennepin County, now almost coextensive with Minneapolis. Fifty years later, when his son-in-law went to look up a certain deed, the then register, a total stranger, said, "I've got the first plat of that land, by the first register,

Charles G. Ames, and you bet it's as good as it ever was." All the impress of his character left in the community is as good as it ever was, and the gray-haired and fast diminishing band of pioneers still have a word of tenderness and appreciation in their memories of the kindly touch of his hand when they were in trouble, of his humor in meeting the rough vicissitudes of man's battle with the wilderness, of his fairness and integrity in public work.

In word, in print, and with power he helped to build up the Republican party in Minnesota, not because he was a partisan, but because the roots of early Republicanism lay in a humanitarianism above party. What he called the "under-doggedness" of any man or any class of men's condition made him, all his life, a passionate mouthpiece for fair play and fellowship. Thus he became an abolitionist from love of the black man, and not from rancor against the South. The "Minnesota Republican," the first Republican newspaper in the Northwest, owed its existence to him, and became the organ of his plea for justice and for the men who should cleanse the land from her iniquity. In the

"History of the Republican Party in Minnesota" we find his own record: —

"The Republican party in Minnesota consisted originally of such Free-Soilers, Barnburners, Democrats, and old Whigs as were drawn together by their common opposition to slavery. At a local meeting in St. Anthony Falls, July 4 ,1854, — John W. North presiding, and I acting as secretary, — we issued a declaration of opinion, and created a committee to provide for the future. A few weeks later, a purse was made up, a press purchased, I was appointed editor; and in October appeared the first number of the 'Minnesota Republican,' from which I believe the 'Minneapolis Tribune' is the lineal descendant. It was a small affair, but a brave pioneer venture; for I believe it was the first distinct Republican journal in the Northwest, though many older papers of that section were already coming into line with the rising movement against pro-slavery aggression. It was easy to dream of 'a party of moral ideas,' and I ran up the motto, 'Absolute Right is the Highest Expediency'; which excited the mirth of some and the wrath of others.

Epilogue

"In March, 1855, we got together at St. Anthony Falls the first preliminary convention for organization. William R. Marshall was president, Charles G. Ames, secretary, and John W. North and George A. Nouke were members of the committee on platform, to which I contributed a few planks, probably including prohibition, limitation of revenue to the needs of government, and I know not what other matters that proved irrelevant or premature, and therefore deciduous.

"In July, at our committee's call, a much more representative convention met in St. Paul. Many came from the down-river counties. The 'Republican' was blamed for weighting the cause with its insistent protests against both slavery and intemperance, and in July, 1855, Hon. Charles Sumner, then on a visit to Minnesota, called on the editor with a friendly suggestion that we should drop all other questions till the overshadowing national issue should be fought out. His advice represented the wiser instincts of the time; for soon the rising music of the battle-cry of freedom silenced every other sound. But Hennepin

County, where the influence of the Republican paper was mostly felt, was also the centre and chief inspiration of the party's activity and the seat of its first triumphs.

"In 1855, I was nominated for a seat in the territorial council, but withdrew that the old Whig element might have a place on the ticket. In 1856, I was elected register of deeds. Being removed by Governor Sam Medary on the disgraceful charge of issuing fraudulent certificates of election, I was restored on the same day by the commissioners, and afterwards re-elected by a larger majority than had ever been given to a county officer.

"In 1860, after I left Minnesota, a prominent citizen, in a note to the State Department at Washington, described me as a man whose influence and activity had done more than any other to create the sentiment that had made Minnesota a Republican state. But other witnesses could honestly give quite a contradictory testimony, and my own persuasion is that the same result would have been reached as surely if I had remained behind a woodpile or a stone wall in New Hampshire."

Epilogue

That the foundations of Republican principles were laid firm in Minnesota by the group of men of whom Governor Ramsey became the great exponent was proved when, a few years later, at the outbreak of the Civil War, the sparsely settled young state sent one fifth of her population to the front, a larger proportion than any other state, and these men of the calibre of the First Minnesota, who turned the day at Gettysburg. To have helped to create this civic spirit was his service to the crude community.

It was during this period, when the national storm was gathering its forces, that my father had found his spiritual moorings among the Unitarians; but the inner peace had not lessened his interest in the outer turmoil.

Not less significant than the Minnesota work was the address on the death of John Brown delivered in Bloomington, Illinois, in December, 1859, in the church of his first Unitarian charge. To be a Unitarian in the West was a venturesome and rash thing in those days, but to go further and proclaim, as he did, that "On any topic of such absorbing public interest as to set

all other tongues in motion, a Christian minister has no right to be silent. The ministers whose high mission it is to deal with moral principles must never hide their light under a bushel when some event is passing by which the people are half afraid to look in the face," — this was to call down the lightning. Prophets who turn their inspiration to questions of current ethics, who speak the truth fearlessly on topics upon which the majority cannot or dare not think clearly, these have been unpopular since the days of Nathan and Elijah. The John Brown address, with its clear-cut fearlessness, sent a tremor of apprehension through the church not yet sure of its ground; but the community thrilled at the voice of a man. Now, to read it is to wonder at the spiritual genius of the preacher who saw through the mists of unreason and passion that blinded the thinking of the time — saw the ultimate question and the ultimate judgment on that nation-convulsing tragedy.

The power to see to the heart of matters, to keep clear of confusing details, and sense the essential, was a gift like Lincoln's own. It was

small wonder that the preacher valued and understood the statesman — understood him even in the darkest days of 1862, when most of the President's friends were hardly more than lukewarm, and when ardent abolitionists were outspoken and violent in their distrust and disgust with Lincoln's deliberate methods. The following remarkable letter, written in the midst of this period, in October, 1862, to a young relative, shows, like the John Brown address, that spiritual genius for getting at the real meaning of contemporary events: —

"I got a letter from you last evening, and I don't know whether it would be right to thank you for just such an outpouring of spleen against the President or not; but in my opinion you are very, very wrong and unjust, which does n't materially hurt the government, neither does it help you. I think there are few instances in history of such towering virtue and wisdom and tact and wide-souled humanity as meet in the man whom you abuse. I have been impatient at his slowness, but never for an instant have I questioned his fidelity. I did think him weak, but I no longer think so. He takes time, like

Providence, and like Providence he uses all sorts of persons and materials to do his work. Never was a public man so beset with difficulties; never did a man bear himself more courageously, and with more calm consciousness of power. I tell you the men who have a great deal of *un*common sense are sadly deficient in the more common kind. There are plenty of illustrious angels who could n't be trusted to run a hotel. The radicals who have scolded the President as if he were the cause of their troubles have had no just idea of the difficulties, legal and practical, with which he has had to grapple. To repel force with force he had need of a thousand regiments of armed men, and the public interests would best be served by having them all volunteers. This required a certain deference to the immature but rapidly maturing state of opinion on the slavery question. The loss of the capital would have given prestige to the Confederacy, discouragement to the loyalists, malignant activity to the Northern sympathizers. The capital is one hundred miles beyond the border of the free states in an enemy's country. To prevent the sacrifice of several

border states was a delicate task, the Union sentiment in those states being much more like gristle than like backbone.

"It was certain that not one half the people of the North would back up the President in a direct attack on slavery, until it should be apparent that the rebellion could be subdued in no other way. Nor could the President justify to himself or to mankind any attack on slavery not required by the exigency of war. But, seeing that such an exigency would arise, he has been steadily and successfully preparing the public mind for emancipation. He has at length secured the approval of his generals, and the approval of many leading Northern Democrats.

"God bless Abraham Lincoln, honest, sagacious, brave, humane, and true as steel. If you don't know how to pray for him, you miss a great means of grace for your own soul. If your husband was struggling against fearful odds to rescue your own child from the flames, you would have little heart for unfriendly criticism. The President is rendering your children's children a still larger service, and when you see it, you will give him sympathy."

Those deeply shadowed days of the war saw the constant pouring from a frail body of strength and emotion. He never spared himself and his testimony. Preëminently a believer in the conquest of love, he would willingly have gone to the front as a fighter if the recruiting officer had been willing to accept a man of his impaired physique. As it was, since he was not permitted to go a-soldiering himself, his conscience compelled him to pay voluntarily for a substitute; and it was one of fate's little jokes that while the very limited purse of the young minister was strained by this piece of patriotism, and while his body suffered from his constant public speaking on the dominant subject, the substitute had a most comfortable time of it and never faced the enemy.

During the period between 1860 and 1865, my father delivered in Bloomington, Illinois, Washington, Philadelphia, Albany, Boston, and Lowell, five addresses that had in each place a large hearing. These were: "Northern Responsibility for Slavery"; "The Election of 1860"; "The Election of 1864"; "The American Experiment"; "Stand by the President." Copies

of the last of these speeches are still sought by collectors of Lincolniana. But these were by no means all of his contributions to the loyal outburst of the time. During the second Lincoln campaign he made forty-four open-air speeches on behalf of the Republican party.

In 1884, at a meeting held in Philadelphia to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society, among messages and addresses from such men and women as John G. Whittier, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., Elizur Wright, Mary Grew, Susan B. Anthony, Wendell Phillips, and Dr. Furness, Charles G. Ames was also called upon for a speech. Characteristically, he gave the human touch: —

"In entering the hall to-day I brushed against a colored man, wearing the blue coat and bright buttons of the Philadelphia police. He seemed the summing-up of the history of these fifty years. He is doubtless a descendant of some who fifty years ago were not regarded as having many rights which the average Philadelphian was bound to respect. Now he stands there as the representative of a revolution which,

in theory, at least, has secured to every colored man in the country the same privileges under the government, and the same rights over it, which were once exercised only by the race which set up the auction-block and swung the lash.

"This brings up the fact that those brave-hearted men and women had no private or selfish interest to serve by the costly outlay of their efforts. Their toil and sacrifices were not stimulated or encouraged by any prospect or desire of advantage to themselves. They obeyed the sacred command; 'Open thy mouth for the dumb; and remember those in bonds as bound with them.' Indeed, the Bible was their armory. Never men lived who felt more surely authorized to appeal to the Eternal, and speak in His name. Never was there a man who knew better than Garrison how to take the words of old Hebrew prophets and make them reverberate like peals of thunder through the land. The abolitionists stood stoutly on the affirmation that slavery is wrong — a sin against God and man; and they thoroughly identified themselves with its victims, the down-trodden and those who had no helper. And they did this in

the days when it was costly; for on the side of the oppressor there was power — the power of Church and State, of politics and trade, of public opinion and private interest.

"And so, in the name of those who dared to speak the forbidden truth; in the name of those who toiled with speech and pen and type for the cause of the despised, sowing with tears, that others might reap with joy; in the name of those anti-slavery women who gathered in the face of howling mobs, thanking God that 'while there were many to molest, there were none that could make afraid'; in the name of those tender yet stout-hearted ones, who pointed the fugitive to the North Star, and put their own lives as a shield between him and the pursuing bloodhounds of the law; in the name of all who at any time, or in any land, have defended the rights which are universal; in the name of

> 'All who wrought for liberty,
> When 't was treason to be free';

and in the name of that great Son of Man who proves himself the Son of God by leading the emancipation of the race from every form of bondage, we join in celebrating the memory

of an event which is a part of the best history of the world's progress."

When the abolition question was settled, and the tense excitement at an end, his body gave way for a time. The brief ministry in Albany was in progress during this period, but Lincoln's second campaign saw a complete breakdown of the too lavish patriot preacher, and drove him to leave his young wife and family in the Eastern city while he made a venture for health in the unknown sunshine of the then almost mythical California. This was, of course, before the first transcontinental railway.

"It was like going to a new world, giving one a sense of Arcadian freshness, with novelties of climate, scenery, and productions." But he was soon absorbed in observations of experiences of human life. California was an America in miniature, with every feature exaggerated. Its population had been acquired by natural selection, including the most enterprising and competent, mixed with reckless adventurers. There was a chance to study human nature undisguised and acting with Walt Whitman's "original energy, free, fresh, savage, and luxuriant." "While the

uniformity of the climate played monotonously on the same sensations, there was a heavy draught of excitement on the nerves; and these causes increased the demand for stimulants, so that one sixty-third of the population of the United States paid one thirty-third of the internal revenue tax. In a climate so genial as to invite the whole population out of doors three hundred days in the year, domesticity was hardly a fashion, and life took on a certain bare wide-openness, showing both its beauty and ugliness, but not favoring the growth of those finer qualities which require shelter and quiet. The lack of repose, the prevailing restlessness and craving for sensations, made life something of a circus and gave a curious dramatic quality to the best things as well as to the worst."

Such a state of society is an excellent school of character for those who can hold their forces together and resist the tendencies to laxity, or who can navigate this chopped sea with its cross-currents and sudden lurches. In spite of tumbled-up conditions and antagonisms, the social relations were often delightful; there was

an abundance of generous comradeship and open-handed helpfulness. But genuine confidence is a plant of slow growth, and friendships of the old-fashioned kind do not take root in a stage-coach, where the jolliest of talkers is watching his fellow-passengers out of one corner of his eye.

But social ardor was soon established in California under the pressure of necessity. Human beings are interdependent, and the early settlers were impelled toward each other by the impulsive violence of homesickness. It was a land of hasty connections in business, society, and marriage. Many hurried partnerships led to swift dissolutions, and many vulgar fractions of families were lying around loose. Freedom opens all doors — to paradise or to perdition. Prizes of wealth and ambition, gained by crowding and clutching, slip out of hand like a football. Men went up by bold operations to giddy political or financial heights, only to fall with every bone broken. You would be astonished to see how soon some of them recovered and climbed again.

The mining industry had already declined,

but the gold fever remained endemically in the form of diseased hopefulness, contempt for small savings, and a habit of free spending. Under such conditions, money rapidly gathers in the hands of the cunning and capable, as well as of the unscrupulous. Hence, there were frightful inequalities and monopolies. In San Mateo County two thirds of the property was held by two hundred or three hundred men, who were basely contriving how to get the rest. With cheap food and a mild climate, California was a good land for the poor; but poverty is not always felt as a blessing, and there were many sullen mutterings.

It was, perhaps, the only country where the clergyman ran some risk of being applauded for a prayer, and clapped on the shoulder for a "devilish good sermon." He contrasted the sweet and musical names given by the Franciscan missionaries with the grotesque ones bestowed by the mockery of the miners — Los Angeles and Dead Man's Gulch. Naturally it was a difficult and exacting field for the teacher of religion, though he might cheer himself with the parable of the sower.

After a year, wife and children followed by way of the Isthmus of Panama, and the seven years on the Pacific Coast that followed were rich in work and in interest.

It was the California of Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller and Mark Twain, with intellectual as well as physical stimulus. Bret Harte himself was an intimate friend, and the "Overland Monthly" was always open to contributions by the young Unitarian minister. There were interesting friendships with people keenly alive; the brilliant Englishwoman, Georgiana Bruce Kirby, who had been at Brook Farm, and who, with the celebrated Eliza Farnham, had ventured into this land of romance to try her fortunes and who was now the Lady Bountiful of the whole region, passionately eager to bring to her little world of Santa Cruz all the finer influences of the great world beyond the Sierras; there was the sumptuous San Francisco family who bloomed with musical and artistic genius.

Here he was the preacher in more than one station. From Santa Cruz he went over the mountains, driving his own horse thirty-two

miles, often accompanied by Mrs. Ames, and the way shortened by alternate reading of the last new book, as the old horse climbed the twisting roads, until San José was reached late in the afternoon and another congregation gathered. Everywhere where two or three could be gathered together, to Watsonville, Santa Clara, Sacramento, the missionary zeal carried him. The years were radiant, too, with a health-giving out-of-doorishness and serenity, with deepening interest in the world in which he lived, particularly in its geology, — and with the greater universe about and above, — and that most worship-inspiring of the sciences — astronomy. On many wonderful mornings there were breakfast picnics on the meadow, caught high up on peaks overlooking the sea, where the broiling of steak on the live coals alternated with the reading of Emerson, and both halted that the picnickers might watch the mists rise and show up the curved picturesque shore-line of Monterey. It was fresh and out of doors. Hearts were warm and easily touched. In after years people known for only a short time were always turning up in Philadelphia or Boston, still with a

glow on their faces, to renew the old friendship that still loomed up to them as one of the big things of their lives.

There was the building of the churches of San José and Santa Cruz. Here, too, came the birth and death of little Theodore, the child with the glowing eyes of the Sistine baby, whose brief life left an exquisitely sensitive spot in the family consciousness, like a wonderful promise unfulfilled. It was after Theodore's death that James Freeman Clarke wrote: "I know — and you know that I know — what the sorrow is that has come into your life, a sorrow deeply interpenetrated with joy, a gladness fed with secret tears! What a mystery is life! and how the dogmatic theologian and the dogmatic scientific person fail to penetrate to its depths and heights, because both have left off wondering. The wonder in such a divine birth of love in our heart for a creature that was nothing to us fourteen months ago, but was verily foreordained from before the foundations of the world to belong to us! For when God gave your little one to you, as mine to me, He gave them forever. The gifts of God are without

repentance. He never takes back again what He gives. He sometimes hangs a veil over it, or borrows it from us for a little while, but if we ever have had it, we have it still. Not the grinding wheel of years, or rush of cares or an avalanche of changes can efface a genuine love, for it is not merely ploughed into us, but it has changed the texture of our nature, making us different through and through."

In 1872 came the return of the little group to the East. Germantown, the beautiful and prosperous suburb of Philadelphia, formed a contrast to the chaotic and vivid California, but here, too, warm human friendships grew up about the minister to add color to all later years. The Germantown church was dignified and charming. Its people had many of them money, and most of them brains. Its prosperity had not made it soggy. It was keenly interested in the problems of the mind and of society; and though these problems were of a type far removed from the frontier kind in which his most active part had been played, yet his attitude of mind, which rested on his sense of kinship to God and man, made the shift of form not difficult. Again he

became not only the minister of a church, but the servant of the community.

The Organized Charity movement was finding its beginning in this country, and into its introduction both the preacher and his wife threw themselves with whole-hearted vigor. It appealed to them as efficient, as an attempt to solve the problems of the "under dog," instead of relying on that impulsive giving, which, while it salves the half-selfish conscience of the giver, does very little to help the man who needs help.

The winter of 1873 was the season following the Jay Cooke failure, and promised to be a season of dire need. Many of the factories and workshops of Philadelphia and the neighborhood were closed. There were continual calls at the back door for food, money, and help. The new family had come from a region where beggary was almost unknown, and these cries for help haunted them like a nightmare. An old experience during the war had left its lesson of the viciousness of "back-door giving," and the wiser and kinder method of "friendly visiting." The visiting, however, revealed an appalling system of fraud on the part of the

pretended needy. But long ago Dr. Chalmers had been read and pondered, while the articles and pamphlets of Octavia Hill and the reported experiences of Elberfeld, Germany, were discussed at the Green Street home. So when Samuel Emlin, one of the noblest of Germantown's friends, through the Germantown "Chronicle" asked for a gathering of all citizens of the borough who were concerned "to provide for the poor of Germantown during the coming winter," the new Unitarian pastor went, with a plan in his pocket of districting the Twenty-second Ward of Philadelphia (namely, Germantown) into eight divisions, and the appointing of visiting committees of citizens to each division. There should be a central office and a paid superintendent, who should receive all applicants and notify the visitors of each case in his or her portion of the borough; there should be a board of directors, and of visitors, monthly meetings of both, and constant communication. No relief in money or material should be given except in emergencies; but for every one, worthy and unworthy, there should be the help of active friendliness.

No one else came with a plan, but only with vague notions of what could be done. It needed but the presentation of this definite scheme of action to insure Samuel Emlin's hearty approval and its immediate adoption. A public meeting was then called, largely attended, and one of the first Organized Charity societies of the United States was set to work. Later the city of Philadelphia adopted materially the same plan, and both Mr. and Mrs. Ames were called upon in the effort to educate public opinion on behalf of a more effective and scientific charity.

While appreciating science and skill in charity, the reformer did not lose his understanding that the heart must lie behind brain and hand. The mechanism of philanthropy never became a machine to him. He says: "We shall not really consider the poor unless we live under the law and in the spirit of brotherhood. Is there danger of one being unwise? There is greater danger of one being unloving. And love is more likely to lead to wisdom than wisdom is to lead to love; for the 'liberal soul desireth liberal things.' There is such a thing as intelligent indifference; and social problems may be studied

in a cold scientific spirit which never quickens into a throb of humanity. This spirit never yet taught one man how to help another. But if we deeply care for the welfare of our fellow-beings, if we have caught the note of sympathy with Him who made Himself poor that many might be made rich, and identified Himself with the least of His brethren and ours, we shall study the best ways of serving them. Very likely our present methods may be improved. But the best machinery of beneficence must have heart-power to run it; and our money contributions will lose their finest value if we do not give ourselves. I do not think we have yet brought into action the mightiest forces for uplifting humanity. We have never drawn on our deepest resources. We have never half realized the power and glory and beauty of sacrifice. What we call our own is not our own; we are not our own; we are joined to the family of mankind as fingers to a hand, as limbs to a body. All we have, all we can rightly get and use, all we are or can become, must be held as a sacred trust and be devoted as a willing offering. The very wit and skill by which we acquire

and manage our small resources is itself a heavenly gift for earthly uses. If we ever learn this lesson and put it in full practice, the sources of poverty, misery, and sin will be dried up."

The kindergarten and the modern advances in education, so in accord with the temper of his own thinking, engaged more and more interest. It has needed the push of many such as he to enforce the conception of education as a means of stimulating and drawing forth the individual life. He cared for everything that stirs the deeps.

The little paper on "The Free Kindergarten" reveals how the outlook of Froebel found its reflection in his mind. Miss Elizabeth Peabody became the friend of the family, and found in them her warm supporters through many years.

One could not pass over these years of activity in Germantown and the near-by Philadelphia without recording that friendship which was perhaps the deepest and most heart-warming of a lifetime. Peter and Susan Lesley were spirits akin to Charles and Fanny Ames, like them in ideals and in constant activity. For

all the years to come there was no break in the constant communion between the two family groups, and the bond could scarcely become a closer one when marriage added its link to those which already had seemed to make the two households one.

Neither could one omit a mention of the intimacy with Dr. William Furness, signalized always by a tender attitude of appreciation on the part of the older minister toward the younger. In a letter written to Ralph Waldo Emerson by his old school-fellow, Dr. Furness says, "We had a high day last Sunday at our church. R. Collyer and Charles Ames. Do you know Ames? Second to no man in the American pulpit. Glorious fellow!"

In writing of friendship, my father once said: "True friendship is a religious experience — a holy sacrament. It is refining and enrichment of mind and heart, and a preparation for a larger living and wider relations with spiritual beings. To know and trust and love one human being ought to help us to such a way of thinking and feeling as would lead up to pure universal fellowships. We shall know when our relations

with each other are orderly and pure by this test; they will help us toward the perfect God."

Singularly blessed in friendships of this rare spiritual quality throughout his life, my father had perhaps something in him which brought the best in other men and women, and the best of other men and women, into the circle of his intimates. The affection for Dr. Furness had this character, a friendship passed on to the younger Dr. Horace Howard Furness, who, through years in which there was but little personal contact, kept up a warm current of letters which cemented the relation.

The three years of editing the "Christian Register" were perhaps as hard-working and hard in other ways as any during my father's varied and laborious life. With the home thirteen miles out of Boston, at Grantville (now Wellesley Hills), and the daily trips back and forth by train, he missed those closer human relations that came naturally to him in the ministry. The public was bigger, perhaps; it was also farther away. He could not see the eyes light up when the message went home.

During the winter of 1876–77, while still

preaching in Germantown, he had been granted the use of his Sunday evenings by his generous congregation, whose members had also helped by large contributions to gather a small city audience at Spring Garden Institute Hall, Philadelphia, and this Sunday evening preaching he continued during the "Christian Register" years, though it involved the much longer journey from Boston to Philadelphia. It was wearing work to be an editor week days in one city, and a preacher Sundays in another city three hundred miles away. Valuable as was the work of the office, the call of his chosen field grew more insistent, until 1880, when five persons banded themselves together and agreed to support the newly formed Spring Garden Unitarian Church for five years, he relinquished the editorship and once more became a citizen of Philadelphia. By the next year the little communion had ninety-two members, and ventured upon establishing itself as a church at Broad and Brandywine Streets. The eight years of ministry in Philadelphia mark a period of vigor and initiative that had always in them his rare spiritual quality. It was a less usual thing then for the preacher to

be also a man of civic affairs. In the larger life of Philadelphia, in its public meetings, in its efforts at political cleansing, he could remain neither silent not inactive. It is an interesting fact that Philadelphia has found its reform mayor, Rudolph Blankenburg, among the devoted little band who formed the nucleus of the Spring Garden Church.

In May, 1912, Professor Leslie W. Miller summed up the Philadelphia ministry as follows: —

"There was no mystery about the secret of Mr. Ames's success. What counted was not what he knew — what he said — or what he did, so much as what he was. People accepted him and his leadership because there was no possible reason for doubting his genuineness and the genuineness of the vocation to which he was called. No man since Lincoln, whom in many ways he much resembled, has ever embodied more unmistakably or unaffectedly the distinctive characteristics of the day and generation to which he belonged. No man ever smacked more truly of the soil in which his character was rooted, or carried into the higher

regions of his thought and work more of the sturdy native spirit by which he must have been as a child inspired and informed. He made himself a power in the community because he touched its life at so many points, and its varied problems with so sure a hand. Men could not help accepting his leadership when he showed his mastery of problems that interested or puzzled them. Men of all creeds were drawn to him when they heard him speak as 'one having authority,' on such subjects as education, charity, political reform, and the main burning questions by which a community like this is agitated from time to time. He founded this church, and men of all shades of opinion, many of whom had never thought of themselves as Unitarians before, responded to his call and became his followers. He showed how large is the number, in a city like this, of those who, though virtually unchurched, are ready to respond to the call of a reasonable religion when the call is made effective — 'Man can do what by man has been done'; and this church cannot help going forward to a still larger and fuller measure of accomplishment if it remains true to the prin-

ciples and abides faithfully in the spirit which distinguishes the strong and gentle leader of men who was its first minister."

When he was sixty years of age, he received a call to Boston, to that very church in which he had formed his first Unitarian connections, when, as a young man, he stepped out from the Free-Will Baptist body into what at first looked like outer darkness.

James Freeman Clarke's handclasp had kept its warmth through all these years. The friendship between the two had its roots deep in the large-mindedness and large-heartedness which they shared. That Unitarianism bears such fruit as these is a sufficient proof of its character-making power, a sufficient refutation of the accusation of coldness. In 1871 Mr. Clarke had phrased his loyal friendship thus: "Among all the good things of this world, the best is love. Here are you in California and I in Massachusetts, and your scrap of writing makes my heart vibrate and a thrill of sympathy with you go through me. So it would be if you were in Sirius and I in Nebula, scientifically examining the photosphere with a spectroscope. A glacial

period might intervene and encompass the earth with ice forty miles thick, but it would not freeze up permanently human affections. When thawed out after three hundred and fifty thousand years, I should yawn and say, 'But where is Ames all this time?' "

There can be no doubt that the call to the Church of the Disciples touched a very tender chord in my father's affections. The traditions of the church were such as found their echo in him. It was a free church; no pew had or has ever been rented or sold; it was free also in spirit.

"Discipleship means pupilage. To join this church has never implied a profession of religion as something already attained; it has signified a desire to enter the school of Christ as a learner, and then to put the lessons in practice like an apprentice. Any one can join as easily as a boy or girl can be enrolled in the public school; as easily, let us say, as a Galilean peasant could join the company that gathered on the hillside or the shore of the lake to get what help he might from an hour's contact with the Teacher. It was made equally easy to retire.

No member was to be held one moment by an unwilling bond; to enter the word 'withdrawn' opposite a name was enough. Then there has been no encroachment upon the liberty of thought, speech, or action; the members of the church are as free as if the church did not exist; and they have gained the added freedom and help which came from union, sympathy, and coöperation. Baptism and the Supper are retained and honored, but they are optional. Their observance is not insisted upon."

Zealous in public spirit and in large philanthropy, the Church of the Disciples has always numbered among its members men and women who played a noble part in Boston and in the country. "In the book of the covenant, next to James Freeman Clarke's name stand those of Dr. Nathaniel Peabody and his wife, Elizabeth, followed by his three daughters; Mary, who married Horace Mann, Sophia, who became the wife of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Elizabeth P., the mother of kindergartens in America. Here are the autographs of George C. and Walter Channing, George W. and Sophia Bond, William F. and Isabella Weld, John

Farrar and his wife, Eliza, Edward and Margaret Winslow, Samuel E. and Caroline Brackett, Samuel and Elizabeth Cabot and Henry Williams, Jr., with his wife and sister Harriet." Later Governor Andrew, Mr. and Mrs. Huntington Wolcott, whose first son, Huntington, was to give his life in the war, and whose second son, Roger, was to become Governor of Massachusetts, Mrs. Mary Hemenway, one of Boston's greatest philanthropists, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, and others, perhaps less known but equally devoted, wrote their names among the disciples in what, for its fellowship of spirit, became nicknamed the "How-de-do Church."

Here Mr. Ames was to give the ripe years of his life to a ministry which included tender and warm relations with his own parishioners, and full and effective service of the community at large — a service colored in the minds of all by a benevolence that radiated from him. In "giving the charge" to a young minister he once said, "Take heed to your spirit and temper, that you speak the truth only in love. The time cometh when, looking in the Master's eye of tender, awful goodness, you shall judge

it better to have spoken three words in charity than three thousand in disdainful sharpness of wit." Speaking of truth in love was a habit of my father's. Out of love he could not refrain from bearing his testimony on many questions of the day. As Samuel Eliot said: "He made his pulpit a throne of spiritual affirmation. It afforded him the opportunity for the unhampered play of his peculiar genius as apostle, prophet and poet, and as a master of epigrammatic and picturesque expression. Like the great Teacher he revered, he saw parable and material for instruction in every experience. His mind, as he said of Dr. Bartol, was like a mint, continually striking off bright coins of thought and speech. He worshipped neither antiquity nor novelty, but trusted in the ever-shining light which showed to him an open way. He saw — and what he saw he proclaimed — the Real Presence in nature, in history, in humanity, and in the silent order of the world."

Of this Boston ministry Walter Leon Sawyer says: —

"Perhaps no minister was ever exposed in

Boston to a severer test than that which confronted Dr. Ames when he came to the Church of the Disciples — founded in 1841 by James Freeman Clarke — as Dr. Clarke's successor. To be sure he had been 'named' by the founder himself, but the church, built up about one strong and pervasive personality, could hardly have been expected to accommodate itself readily to another. And it was a congregation with ideas of its own, being, if one may so speak, one of the most democratic aristocracies ever assembled in Boston. There were names like Weld and Hemenway and Peabody on the rolls; also there were poor folks, white and black, in many of the pews — not shoved off in a corner either, because all the sittings have been free from the beginning. Viewed in the large, it was an acutely intelligent body of men and women. It was, moreover, one that accepted and steadfastly followed Dr. Clarke's statement of purpose: 'The object of this church shall be, united thought and action in the study and practice of Christianity.' In the early days it bore its testimony unflinchingly against the Mexican War. Later, John A. Andrew was the superin-

tendent of its Sunday School, and it sent its young men into the Union army and its young women to the South to teach the negroes. Three of the city's great charities grew up within it. It believed in free thought, free speech, and all the manful deeds that naturally accompany them. Dr. Clarke was the only Unitarian minister in Boston who insisted upon Theodore Parker's right of utterance. Women took part in the business meetings, held office, and, as, for instance, Julia Ward Howe, a member for many years, were welcomed to the pulpit. In the successor to James Freeman Clarke, such a congregation looked for superior preaching, and it demanded that the preacher be congenial as well as gifted — which on the face of it might have seemed an embarrassing requirement, since Dr. Ames was not a University man, had begun in Unitarianism as a 'come-outer' from one of the smaller sects, had ministered to Minnesota pioneers and California ranchmen and miners, and, though indorsed by Philadelphia, vouched for by Dr. Clarke, and already accepted as one of the leading men of the denomination, had been too busy all his

life to acquire pretty 'accomplishments.' Old Disciples admit that the new minister was received with some misgiving. But after a month or two, when the spiritual radiance of the man had permeated the congregation, he was taken to its inmost heart. In the pulpit, he had not Dr. Clarke's impressive presence and ponderous manner, and, though his voice was singularly sweet, his delivery at times contained a suggestion of hesitancy; but the content of his discourses was reverent as well as large-minded, informed with sound scholarship, reinforced with those most effective illustrations that are drawn from everyday life, and uniformly practical, vital, and inspiring. And the sermon revealed the preacher, who could neither pose nor truckle nor condescend, because his nature bound him to simple friendliness and sincerity."

He retained his loyalty to the black man. Whenever a helping hand could be stretched out, his hand was ready, and his voice outspoken for Hampton, for Booker Washington, for a hundred struggling individuals. One likes to think of the friendly humor of his comment on the black boy who served at his summer home:

"I am told there are children down the road who call out 'nigger!' as he passes; but it would serve most of us just right if Henry should get one of the higher seats in the heavenly places."

The motives that had made him an abolitionist made him an anti-imperialist. "It is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant," found in him an echo. That the United States should use its power for dominion instead of for development of a weaker people galled him with a sense of personal sin. He never lost an opportunity to protest in public against our treatment of the Philippines. He writes, "I have gone through the President's letter with some care, and could hang him on his own crafty testimony. His record as he writes it is such as any Roman congress might have made of beneficent subjugation." And again, "I still wake up with a start of horror at the thought of my country's misdoings, but I never lose faith in the Power that makes for righteousness." As he opposed dominion, so he advocated peace; and that world-movement which is like a distinct evolutionary step in the consciousness of our race could count

on his heart and voice. Of his civic activity, Edwin Mead says: "Of his fidelity and courage in the great industrial and political issues in these recent years it is superfluous to speak, for his voice is still ringing in our ears. He hated our new and un-American militarism and imperialism with a holy hatred. Politics was to him as religious as to the Puritan. When the new voter's Festivals were inaugurated a dozen years ago at Faneuil Hall, he gave the festival the noblest name it ever had, that of a 'political consecration service'; and from the first, for as many years as he was able, he was always present there to lead the impressive gathering of young men in repeating the historic old Freeman's oath of our Massachusetts' fathers. 'I do solemnly bind myself that I will give my vote and suffrage as I shall judge in my own conscience may best conduce to the public weal. So help me God.' "

The movement for woman's suffrage had also his warm support from its beginnings through his life. Whether the character of those whom he knew best created in him exceptional courtesy of mind toward women, or whether this attitude

attracted rare women to him, it would be as hard to decide as it is to judge which is cause and which effect in most of the complexities of our being. In the intimate family circle he was blessed in daily contact with women of such mind and character and charm as touch the springs of life with idealism and make it easy to believe in all good possibilities. But also in the larger circle he had that rare gift of friendship for women which carries with it chivalry of mind, the delight of sex without self-consciousness. He was, as it were, a brother to all women, tender, sympathetic, helpful, understanding. It came easy for them to lay their hands in his with trust. This was perhaps one very noble evidence of that deeper sight which taught him to look at every human being he met as a spiritual adventurer, which wiped out all class consciousness, whether of man or woman, black or white, poor or rich, high or low. He delighted in the quotation, "All minds are of one family."

This made him a believer in everything in education, in civil and political rights, in public service that helps a woman to possess herself.

"The ideal woman is in sight," he said, "though perhaps we see her most clearly when we shut our eyes. In the common mind and heart an image is forming itself, an image to which the actual woman does not wholly correspond, yet the actual woman is making the ideal woman possible." Exactly the same words, one may be sure, he would have used of the actual and the ideal man.

"The air is disturbed by sounds not wholly musical. But so it is when the newborn infant cries. Such cries are more than music to the ear of the mother.

"If political freedom comes next, the last outward sign of social inferiority will disappear, and women will have a fair and equal field for development, hindered only by their own limitations. The more intelligent advocates of equal suffrage regard it as a movement for the defense and improvement of the family. They believe that complete enfranchisement will add to the dignity and self-respect of women by taking off the brand of inferiority; that it will enrich her culture of heart and mind with broader human interests; that it will thus help to make her a

wiser guide for children and a more valuable associate of man in all their partnership interests. They believe also that it will arm her with power to protect the home against its now legalized enemies, and give her a voice in the decision of educational and economic questions which concern her and those who are dear to her.

"Nobody supposes that the Kingdom of Heaven is to come out of the ballot-box; but it will be clear gain if this last difficult step can be taken in the direction of equality of rights and unity of interests as between the sexes."

As to the fear that the enfranchisement of women will impair the home, he repudiates the idea that the sanctity of home is built on the sand of political institutions.

"Unless the security of home and family relations is provided for in woman's own nature, all is lost. But there is no permanent cause for alarm. So long as her warm heart continues to beat with the passion of love, home and family will be her supreme interests."

The progress recently made he believes to have enlarged, not lessened, the very qualities that make for deeper womanhood.

Epilogue

"Is it too much to say that the last century has seen in Christendom a richer flowering-out of radiant, superb, and almost angelic womanhood than any five centuries that went before? Is it too much to say that no modern fact is so full of promise as the array of womanly forces now at work for good in the school and the church, the community and among the nations?"

As the sympathy with abolition brought my father in contact with such men as Lincoln, Garrison, Whittier, and later brought Booker Washington to his table; as his advocacy of the cause of temperance had numbered such women as Frances Willard among his friends; so the suffragist sympathies gathered among the family intimates Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe, and a hundred others of the first great group of workers for equal rights.

The twenty years of active life in Boston were crowded to their brim. There was continual public speaking; often he averaged an address a day on subjects political, philanthropic, educational, religious. His mind was alive on all

its sides. His sympathies warmed toward all that touched life. Through the home there flowed a continual human stream of those who came for help, for inspiration, and for pure love. One year, when a record was kept, it was found that there were only two meals, outside of breakfasts, during the entire twelve months, when there had not been some one besides the family at the table. Often the study door was shut while some one's tragedy was being laid bare for the salve or the surgery of this doctor of souls. In fact, people in trouble, whether they had known him before or not, seemed led by instinct to his door; and the curious light that lay deep behind his eyes was a physical sign of some sight that lay deeper than most men's into the depths of the spirit at which he looked.

It was a great, rich, active life, vivid in interest. There was no dead spot in him. That it could keep its character and its vitality through eighty years is in no small degree owing to the wife whose intellectual interests matched his own, whose sympathies were as keen, whose genius created the home in which such a spirit as his could live and move and have its being

with no sense of restriction, but with constant stimulus to be its best, and where his body found the repose and care that it needed.

Never was a man with less personal ambition. Whatever distinction or prominence came to him had to be thrust upon him in spite of his indifference. Yet those whom he met knew him for a great man, great in the inner and not the outer sense of the word. If life was rich and sweet and full of joy to him, it was because —

> "All good things await
> Him who cares not to be great
> Save as he saves or serves the State."

Yet, although this tribute to his greatness lies in the consciousness, the memories, the transformed lives of a silent thousand, there were not wanting expressions of appreciation on the part of the community.

Perhaps few things touched him more than a manifestation of affection and trust that came from the church connection that he had left in his young manhood. Bates College conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Of this it was said: —

"The bestowal of the degree of D.D. upon the Rev. Charles Gordon Ames of this city is an act of peculiar graciousness on the part of Bates College, as that institution was founded by the Free Baptist Denomination, from whose ministry he withdrew some years before he found his place among the Unitarians. It is a handsome instance of magnanimity toward one whom the *odium theologicum* would once have branded as a renegade and apostate; and quite apart from the academic compliment, it may well come to him as a gratifying proof that he has retained both the respect and good will of his former associates. No degree of dignity or degradation could alter the affectionate esteem in which Mr. Ames is held by the Church of the Disciples, nor materially hurt the high position which he has won in the public regard, but this outside recognition of his quality and achievement will be a gratification to all who know his genuine worth and his modest display of it."

An interesting commentary on this degree-conferring is found in Mr. Sawyer's words many years later: "He never declined a friendship because of honest difference of opinion, and

it is questionable if, on that score, he ever lost one."

On his eightieth birthday a reception was given by his congregation in the Unitarian rooms to him whom one called "the gentle soul who now outranks in years every other pastor in the greater Boston circle."

"To be still at fourscore the guide and instructor of the cultured congregation that assembles in the Church of the Disciples on the Fenway, and to be unanimously wanted still, in that capacity, is an achievement in itself meriting public notice. To have carried that church and congregation over a period of transition involving uprooting and re-rooting required something more than the amiability with which our friend has been so liberally endowed. And when to this service is added the support which for twenty years he and Mrs. Ames have brought to many charitable undertakings, and an ever-widening personal influence over individuals, one stops even in this hurrying age to remove the hat and utter cordial wishes in the presence of Dr. Ames. He has risen to his proper level by being what he is — a large-

minded, winsome disciple of Christ. A poet he is in the fineness of his intuition, an optimist with assured convictions that the world is coming out all right, a persistent lover of God and his fellow-men."

President Eliot said on this occasion:—

"It is the habit of a republic to think much of the majority. The individual is apt to sacrifice his own views in order to make them conform with common view. There is no finer character than the man who can control his forces by independent courageous thinking. If he can express his thought in clear, incisive, epigrammatical form, he will be a living force in the community. And if to this he adds spiritual and poetic faculties in such measure as our friend Dr. Ames does, his influence is not easily calculable."

"Out West," Dr. Hale added, "somebody shakes your hand and says, 'I am a friend of Dr. Ames.' Throughout the country he is known and loved. He's not a Boston man, nor a Massachusetts man, but an American."

My father's literary work was a natural outflowering of his daily thought. Exactly as he

spoke and lived, so he wrote — wrote with a straightforwardness and simplicity which has in it something almost elemental. The atmosphere of Biblical expression permeated his style; and like that of Biblical writers was his gift for using the homely facts of every day for trenchant illustrations of spiritual truth, as well as for finding in all passing experience the expression of something permanent. Nor must one forget that delicate sense of humor which acted as a balance wheel on his sanity and kept things in their true proportions. It is doubtful whether a man could be a wise critic of life without it. He himself characterizes it thus aptly, "Is n't it curious how you come suddenly round a corner and see in a ridiculous light what the second before you had thought dignified if not quite sublime?"

Humor was so constantly effervescing in him that it played like sunshine around all his human relations. It made him a charming and unexpected actor in family charades and games. It penetrated the weak spot in an argument. It even converted an enemy into a friend, as in the case of a famous Californian bully who took

offense at some words of the preacher, and who walked up and snapped an insulting finger in his face, exclaiming, "Mr. Ames, I'd lick you for a penny!" Quick as a flash the minister replied, "I won't give it" — and anger and enmity died in a laugh. Or he punctuated a truth by some apt illustration, often homely and epigrammatic, like, "There's no use breaking a bad egg to keep it from hatching." And again, when a ministerial discussion was going on as to whether current politics should be handled in the pulpit, he said he felt himself free to speak on any subject, but added: "However, when my people come to me hungry for spiritual bread, I don't think it best to feed them sour apples." A young girl tells of how she went to consult her spiritual adviser as to something she had done that she thought unkind and mean. He listened till she had poured out her story, told her what steps he thought she might take to make reparation, and added: "Then dismiss the whole subject from your thoughts — unless you like to chew nettles. I know only one animal that does."

An excellent antidote that for morbidness.

For his humor did not run away with him. It remained the servant of greater things.

As Mr. Mead says: —

"Following Dr. Hale at an interval of but three years, Dr. Ames was the last figure of the great Unitarian group. There was no other in the group whose mind had in its very texture more of New England Transcendentalism. There was no other quite so Emersonian. A hundred of his sermons were almost Emerson essays. He had Emerson's firm and quiet faith, his penetration and poetry of nature, his wit and humor and sententiousness, his gift for homely illustration, his buoyant optimism and his democracy."

Four sermons, "The Fatherhood of God," "The Brotherhood of Man," "The Leadership of Jesus," and "Salvation by Character," have been published in England and are there in constant use for post-office mission work. Anthems have been arranged from two of his poems, "Push out from Shore," and "The Day of God," and an English composer has also set "The Mountain Top" to music.

While many individual sermons have found

their way into print, either by the American Unitarian Association or through James West, the list of books is not a long one: "George Eliot's Two Marriages," "Peter and Susan Lesley," "As Natural as Life," "Sermons of Sunrise," "Five Points of Faith," "Living Largely," "Hidden Life," and last but by no means least, the little "Book of Prayers," for which a friend played the part of stenographer without the knowledge of the preacher, and the publication of which formed the tribute of the Church of the Disciples on his eightieth birthday.

Of this volume Mr. Sawyer writes: —

"Herein the prophet and the poet was most fully revealed. Here was a man who talked with God, not at Him, never with presumption, but always with confidence. As literature these invocations were little masterpieces, but one never thought of them as literature — until long after the spell was lifted. Aspirations of a devout and generous nature toward the more complete union of all with the Highest, they thankfully commemorated the victories won by the forces of good in the world and in the in-

dividual soul, pleaded strength for the tempted, and embraced with tender pity the weak and the wicked as well as the suffering and sorrowful. 'There are deep things of God. Push out from shore,' Dr. Ames had written. The prayers were voyages into the infinite. Almost while one listened one expected to see the tall spare figure wrapped into the highest heaven and to catch all the cadences of the New Song that seemed to echo through the words."

Unitarianism and unitarian fellowship had supplied the glowing atmosphere in which he breathed freely during the fifty years of his most active life. That he should be loyal to both name and church was inevitable. Freely he had received; freely he gave.

He served on the Council of the National Conference from 1875 to 1878. He had three terms of service as a Director of the American Unitarian Association, 1877–78, 1890–93, and 1893–96. In all these posts of service Dr. Ames was assiduous, faithful, influential. His was always a conciliatory spirit, while, at the same time, absolutely brave and candid.

Scarcely a session of the Conference passed

in which he did not take some part, either in devotional services, speeches, or more elaborate addresses.

The Ministers' Institute was founded in 1876; Dr. Ames made the closing address on the evening of the last session, and more frequently than any other person was called upon to speak the last word at the end of each biennial session of the Institute.

Perhaps no better illustration of the spirit of his loyalty to the church of his adoption could be given than the following letter which he wrote in 1897 to an inquirer whom he had never met. The words show large affection and understanding unflecked by partisanship. The thing that made him a good Unitarian kept him fair and benevolent toward those from whom he differed: —

My dear Sir: —

Your questions reach me, *touch* me, and make me wish to give a much fuller answer than time and strength permit. I am not set for the defence of Unitarianism or any other mere aspect or interpretation of the Truth which

makes men wise unto salvation. If you impeach a sect or a doctrine as not representing Fulness and Finality, you will have the best of it. For me, as for you, infallibility is no longer one of the notes of the True Church.

I do *not* "cast out" such work as Mr. Moody's, nor any other which honestly aims to seek and save "lost" men. But I can no longer use his ideas and methods. For ten years I tried in great sincerity (as a Baptist preacher), and I am grateful for the good that came of it, though it was small. When I learned to love God with all my mind, as well as with all my heart — when I set myself to seek and follow and teach what I could be "fully persuaded" was truth, regardless of my creed and prepossessions — everything shifted (as I think *you* know how). I did not assume that an answer would be found for the ever-multiplying questions; nor do I look for such an answer in 10,000 years; but it was a great spiritual emancipation to have my mind as free to move in the realm of religion as in the realm of science or politics or literature. This *free method* brought me into alliance with others who had accepted it; and they happened

to be called Unitarians. The name has never seemed to me clearly descriptive of the movement; but that is of less importance than the principle and animus of the movement itself and the character of its adherents.

Does their theology seem better than their religion? Yes, I agree with you, and confess with humility and penitence that it is much easier to talk well than to live well. The situation would be greatly improved if this charge could be verified *only* against the little company of Unitarians. They have been endeared to me by their very high average of character.

But "what does Unitarianism do to save the lost?" Precious little, if you limit the "lost" and "saved" to our old evangelical sense. Precious *much*, if you mean the rescue of the mind from ignorance and the uplifting of lives to the level of Christ — like sonship to God and brotherliness toward man. My own observation extends now over more than 35 years spent among Unitarians; and while I cannot pretend that all who so call themselves are unselfish or devout, I can say that the whole trend of the movement has been far more al-

truistic, and that it has borne far more abundant fruit in practical philanthropy, than I ever saw in my evangelical connections. For character building — for solid and real religiousness, without rant, or cant, and with a minimum of profession or outward observance — I saw nothing among my evangelical circles (taking the average) to be compared with what I have found in this "brotherhood of seekers after the highest truth and the highest life."

But it should be joyfully said that in recent years the good Spirit has been bringing men of all names into a much larger and richer experience of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and which are ever coming to willing and receptive spirits, regardless of creed or label.

Let me add this: The historic peculiarity of Unitarian development had supplied what appears to me a providential agency for saving those who were in danger of being "lost" to faith and hope in this era of upheaval and transition. Generally speaking, a Unitarian church becomes a religious home for those who have lost hold of the older theology and are in danger of giving up religion itself because they

had been taught to accept or reject by wholesale. I have personally known many, and have heard of many more, who would have passed clear over to Ingersoll's position, had they not heard of a positive and rational interpretation of religion quite independent of critical results and wholly respectful to the rights of reason.

Yours — still asking, seeking, knocking, and expecting much from the generous Giver,

CHAS. GORDON AMES.

Of the temper of the man and writer, Rev. Frederick Hinckley writes: —

"As I think of Mr. Ames, the unique character of the man stands out in clear outline. He was not modelled after stated rules. He had his own ways and his own forms of expression, which frequently came to the listener with a spring-like freshness of surprise. He was a bearer of good cheer always. It was not given to him to utter doleful notes. He marched under the cloud as in the sunshine with a beautiful affirmative faith. He was a human Catholic. The sweep of his feelings took in all humanity of whatever sect or color or race. He

unconsciously made you aware of this when you came near him. To him brotherhood meant sisterhood, it meant humanhood."

Says one: "He had such a broad grasp of religion as a working program of all life that out of his heart he gave to the world what is probably the most widely accepted of church covenants by churches of every faith. It is not inconceivable that sometime under its banner the Christian churches of the world might rally."

This simple sentence crystallizes the religion by which he lived and worked and died: —

"In the freedom of the Truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of Man."

THE END

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